

# The Nation

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## Events of the Week.

FURTHER light on the German overtures to peace has led in one respect to acute disappointment. A mistranslation of a phrase in the Note had led to the general belief that it was merely a preface to definite proposals which accompanied it. It turns out that there is as yet no tender of terms, but only an invitation to confer. For this reason, and perhaps for others, the Note was transmitted by the American Government without comment. The reasons for this reticence may lie in the Chancellor's domestic problem. While it is certain that the German masses ardently, even desperately, desire peace on any honorable terms, it is clear that the extremists are still active. The parties which represent the metallurgical and agricultural interests go on clamoring for annexations, an attitude which may perhaps be traced to the fact that they are wallowing in war-profits. Their strategy is to demand discussion of the terms in the Reichstag, and thus the Chancellor, in the interests of moderation, is plainly anxious to avoid. Meanwhile, it should be noted that Count Bernstorff has made what was apparently an official statement to the American Press, that Germany desires a general reduction of armaments below the pre-war level, and also the dissolution of alliances, as part of the constructive policy of a League of Nations.

THE Allied answer was anticipated in France and Russia. M. Briand warned us all against a "snare." The Duma passed a resolution (it is said unanimously) calling for the summary rejection of any overtures—the unanimity must be interpreted in the light of the fact that the Socialist members who are not in Siberia have been suspended. An official statement took the same line. The British answer was foreshadowed in

Parliament on Tuesday by the Premier and Lord Curzon. The Allied answer will be forwarded in a few days, and it will be, as Lord Curzon put it, a "reasoned" reply. The substance of it may be gathered from Mr. George's concluding sentence: "We will, therefore, wait until we hear what terms and guarantees the German Government offer." The answer, therefore, will be either a refusal to confer until precise terms are offered, or else an invitation to state these terms, and much will depend on the form of words in which this is conveyed. Meanwhile, Mr. George has laid down in outline the kind of terms which the Allies expect—"complete restitution, full reparation, effectual guarantees."

A NEW formula has replaced some of the earlier phrases of the war, and it is slightly more definite than these. It is obvious that each of these three words is capable of a maximum or a minimum interpretation. Restitution means first of all the restoration of occupied territory, and difficulties begin when one asks if it applies to old acquisitions like Alsace-Lorraine, if Poland must be restored to Russia or to the Poles, and whether we will restore the German Colonies or their equivalents. Reparation means chiefly an indemnity to Belgium, but Mr. George seems also to include in it satisfaction for other outrages. Guarantees may be either material or moral. Some would include under this word any conceivable measure for the weakening of German power, including the "break-up" of Austria, strategical demands, and even the confiscation of the fleet. For our part, we hold that the only guarantee against future aggression which is worth considering is the creation of a League of Nations for the enforcement of peace, with its corollaries, a general reduction of armaments, and some modification of the system of alliances. This is what Mr. Asquith would have meant by this word. There is no positive clue in Mr. George's speech to the sense which he attaches to it. But he has suggested an identity of general view, and he has made its expression a little more elastic.

THIS speech has not closed the door to peace. It is well removed from the policy of the "knock-out" blow. It is open to the enemy to answer our "reasoned" Note in a full reply, which must indicate under the three heads what satisfaction he is prepared to make by way of restitution, reparation, and guarantee. The worst of this method of approaching the subject is that it must lead to further recrimination. Advance would be easy if the Chancellor were prepared to accept the Allied premise that he was a wanton aggressor. In the course of this further interchange, we may not at once discover what we really wish to learn: what precisely the Germans will do about Belgium, Poland, the Turkish Straits, and the other real issues in dispute. In the end, those who believe that a fairly early and honorable peace is possible, must search for some other expedient. Formal mediation, in the sense of the actual intervention of the United States, might be premature, and Mr. George has ruled it out. But an intermediary might well undertake the task of ascertaining by confidential conversations what each side really considers

essential. If the results of these conversations were exchanged, it would be possible to decide whether negotiations can be fruitfully opened.

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THE tone of Mr. George's speech, though it banged no door, was not encouraging to our hopes of peace. The Chancellor had boasted tactlessly of German victories. Lord Curzon replied with statistics from the Somme, which showed that the total of German prisoners taken on the Western front since July amounts to 105,000. Mr. George's contribution to the European atmosphere was a ringing denunciation of German crimes, a complaint that Germany had always been "a bad neighbor," and a reference to the Prussian military caste, which might revive the old suspicion that we contemplate as one of our "guarantees" the imposition of internal changes in Germany. All this is the natural language of war, but, no more than the Chancellor's own speech, is it a fortunate preface to peace. On the other hand, the careful reader will note in the speech one passage which suggests that Mr. George does not contemplate an eternally-protracted war. He told us in advocating the mobilization of labor that victory may be beyond our grasp unless reorganization can be promptly carried out. "It is a question of months, perhaps of weeks." This suggests a resolve to fight another round or two, but it marks a reaction from Lord Northcliffe's "another five years."

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ON the constitutional questions involved in the new Ministry Mr. George touched very lightly. Lord Crewe, in the Lords, had talked of a "cabal" and a "dictatorship," and the "absence of collective responsibility for policy." Mr. George was content to repeat the current demand for a small Cabinet—the saying that in the multitude of counsellors there is wisdom was adapted to Oriental countries and to times of peace. He has, however, realized the dissatisfaction of the House, debarred from "work" and relegated to the passive function of listening to the "defences" (usually by proxy) of Ministers. He declared vaguely for the French system of committees, and professed himself willing to further such a reform. An almost otiose reference to Ireland provoked a sharp retort from Mr. Redmond, who saw in it more of "wait and see" than of despatch and decision. He urged the release of the five hundred untried Irish prisoners as a palliative, which indeed Mr. Duke has half-promised. But for a remedy he called on the Government to solve the Home Rule question, not by negotiation, but on their own responsibility, and warned them not to include in it the question of conscription. That must follow spontaneously from the "change of heart" in a reconciled Ireland.

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THE method of solving problems by the appointment of a superman has great fascination when once you start on it. It is, therefore, no surprise to hear that a General Service Dictator has been appointed. Mr. Neville Chamberlain, the Lord Mayor of Birmingham, learnt as he was getting into the train at Euston that he was to fill this difficult and Olympian position. We are to begin, apparently, with voluntary arrangements, and Mr. Chamberlain is personally to be the Lord Derby of recruiting for civilian war work. He is well known as a man of energy and tact, and may be trusted to proceed with caution. The passion for pigeon-holing everybody is natural in a crisis, but it is easy to waste, in finding pigeon-holes, more time than is gained by filling them. The whole question of industrial service bristles with difficulty and dangers, and the Government, we hope, will beware of compulsory methods. Mr. Lloyd George

before speaking of the organization of our man-power on Wednesday, promised to deal in a more drastic way with war profits, and to see that sacrifices were imposed on all alike. The arrangements for securing this very proper object will be awaited with anxious sympathy. Meanwhile the new forced rise in the price of travel (50 per cent.) will greatly cut down real wages and salaries, even under the exemption of workmen's tickets.

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MR. LLOYD GEORGE announced in his speech on Wednesday that the Government were considering the policy of taking over all the coalfields. He did not give an account of the conditions in which this control will be assumed. It is to be hoped that some careful arrangement will be made in concert with the Miners' Federation, for the success of any scheme depends on securing the co-operation of the miners by a method of joint control. State control is regarded at this moment with great suspicion, and that fact must constantly be kept in mind. It would be fatal to get into the way of thinking that the Ministry of Labor is a kind of buffer between the Government and the working classes, and that it may be trusted to smooth over all difficulties. The debate on the subject of the Ministry on Monday was not very satisfactory, and both criticism and defence of the Bill alike rather tended to set up a false view of the proper place and functions of such a Department.

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THE Bill for creating the new Ministries passed its second reading on Monday. The new Home Secretary, in putting the case for the Bill, said that the Ministry of Shipping was the most urgent of the new Departments. At present the control of shipping was vested in two Departments, the Admiralty and the Board of Trade, and in three Special Committees, the Shipping Control Committee, the Ships Licensing Committee, and the Port and Transit Executive Committee. The new Minister would exercise all the powers possessed by these Departments and Committees, and, if necessary, further powers would be conferred on him by regulations under the Defence of the Realm Act. It would be his business to decide what part of our shipbuilding energy should be devoted to naval purposes and what to building merchant ships, and in what proportion merchant shipping should be used for military and for civilian war requirements. Some critics asked what was to happen if the Controller and the Admiralty disagreed, and Mr. Bonar Law replied that the question would then come before the War Cabinet, and that the great advantage of the scheme was that it simplified and expedited the deliberations.

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ON the question of the Control of Food, Mr. Dillon raised the important point of the relation of the Food Controller to the Board of Agriculture. The new Minister is to have power not merely to regulate the supply and consumption of food, but to take such steps as he thinks best for encouraging the production of food. Mr. Dillon protested against this arrangement on the ground that the Board of Agriculture was now in the hands of a Minister with great knowledge, whereas Lord Devonport knew nothing about it. He added that in Ireland there was confidence in the new Minister of Agriculture but not in the Food Controller. Mr. Bonar Law, in his reply, admitted that there was ample scope for friction, and if there was serious disagreement the difference would come before the War Cabinet, but he did not believe that the Minister of Agriculture and the Food Controller would disagree.

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MR. PROTHERO, the new Minister of Agriculture, suggested in a very grave speech, that this disagreement had, in fact, occurred, but that the two Ministers had

agreed on a "charter." His present survey of the food trouble was that we, like Germany were "a beleaguered city"; that the war would be won or lost on the fields and potato patches of England; and that the labor difficulty had not been solved. His chief immediate remedy—new remedies are being hatched and announced every hour—was to fix the contract price for wheat at 60s. a quarter, and to force the cultivation of derelict or poorly-cultivated land. But how sow and reap without labor? And how can farmers be induced to grow wheat by the offer of a State guarantee of 60s., when they can already get a little under or a little over 80s. in the open market?

THE success at Verdun, coming amidst the stir of change and preparation behind the lines and the measured development of the Roumanian campaign, confuses the mind, whereas it should enlighten it. If we could read it aright, it might give us a better measure of the war than any event of the last few months. It seems clear that Russia underestimated the enemy's power on the East; but, while we admit this, how can we escape the conclusion that the Germans have erred as badly as to the offensive potentialities on the Western front? And the question arises: How much more will they risk? Their advance has slowed down in Roumania; but where is it intended to halt? Interior lines are a considerable advantage; but if the enemy means to depend upon them in case of a serious rupture on the Western front, he is more sanguine than wise. The success below Kut has a rôle in the war that must not be ignored. If it should only attract further Turkish reinforcements there it will have fulfilled a sufficiently important purpose. And unless the British are again gambling, there is at least the chance that it may culminate in a partial envelopment.

AFTER a prolonged bombardment west and east of the Meuse the French troops advanced on Friday last between the Meuse and Vaux against the ridge on which Louvemont stands. The Germans had delivered an attack some days ago against Hill 304, in the hope, no doubt, of hamstringing the French assault. They had judged incorrectly and, from a distance, it seems odd that they should have done so. The French had therefore the advantage of a modified surprise, and they went forward with great speed, the curtain fire keeping just in front. Every part of the plan worked smoothly, and some two and a-half miles were covered on a front of six and a-quarter miles. The positions gained are those which were taken by the Germans on the third day of the attack in February; but the French are not, of course, in the same position as on that day, since they voluntarily withdrew from the Woevre plain on the East a few days later. But the most remarkable fact of the success is the number of prisoners captured. In the four days from Friday, 11,387 men were taken, besides 266 guns, mine throwers, and machine-guns. This is a striking German defeat, and it cannot be explained away. The French seem to have succeeded in a local envelopment in the neighborhood of Poivre Hill; but this is tactics, and however we read it the Germans show up badly. They were nonplussed by the attack, and wild and uncertain in their reply. The counter-attack on Sunday only secured a footing in the farm of Chambrettes, and they were ejected on Monday.

AND yet they were in superior force to the assailants. They had one division more in action; General Mangin's fifth division was not used. It is possible

that the Somme offensive is redeeming the position of Verdun as it saved the town in July. There are on the Western Front 123 divisions, almost exactly two-thirds of the total German forces in the field. It is stated that 137 divisions have been identified at various times in the Somme battle. There are, therefore, fourteen divisions on some other front or being nursed behind the lines which have been subjected to the strain and the casualties of the struggle in Picardy. For divisions do not merely appear to be withdrawn. This would lay far too great a strain on the German machine. They remain in the line until their casualties are such that the filling up with drafts cannot infuse sufficient spirit into them to make them useful troops. It is possible that the divisions of Verdun have but recently come from the Somme. Certainly there are only 66 German divisions known to exist which have not been through this nerve-destroying conflict, and the Somme offensive is, therefore, slowly but surely wearing out the German effectives. Two-thirds of the units in the field have been diluted in quality, and the effect of this must appear when any great section of the front is challenged.

THE campaign in Roumania has not provided any spectacular successes during the week, and the pace of the advance has slowed down slightly. The whole Roumanian line is now in retreat. The Dobrudja positions have been abandoned. There have been no pitched battles. The Roumanian and Russian rearguards check the advance when an opportunity offers; but they seem to be falling back towards the Sereth lines, which would offer a better position to the enemy than to the Allies. They were constructed for defence against an attack from the north. The slackening in the advance seems to be partly due to the necessity of foraging expeditions, the wetness of the ground, and the casualties of the campaign, which a Swiss critic puts at 250,000, a large proportion being cases of sickness. There is no sign as yet of a rally, and we have no means of estimating the true state of the case on this sector of the front until the Allies give battle.

It was reported some time ago that General Alexeieff, the chief of the Russian General Staff, had been superseded, and General Gourko appears to have succeeded him. Alexeieff, like Joffre, had been tried by the most crucial test of a soldier, a long and wasting retreat. It was he who, in the summer of 1915, held the line below Lublin and Cholm until the Warsaw force was able to evacuate the city, without the additional peril of envelopment. It was he, too, who withdrew the Russian force from the trap, which had almost closed about it east of Vilna. Both of these, however, were tactical successes. The summer offensive of Brussiloff showed him to be a bold opportunist; but it is certain he underestimated the enemy resources in advising the Roumanian campaign.

MR. MACPHERSON announced on Tuesday that the generals at the Front had reported against the abolition of the punishment known popularly as crucifixion. This report is apparently to be decisive. We deeply regret the conclusion, which is based in some minds on the view that the abolition of this punishment would lead to an increase of the number of death sentences. We have given one reason for thinking that it is wrong to associate degradation with punishment for the sake of degradation. But the criticisms, if they have been unsuccessful in their main object, have not been without effect, for it is announced that measures are to be taken to provide fuller safeguards against the abuses to which such forms of punishment are always liable.



## Politics and Affairs.

### ON THE ROAD TO PEACE?

We shall do well to strip the rhetorical ornament from Mr. Lloyd George's opening speech as Prime Minister, and come to its more deliberate purpose and suggestion of the way to a European settlement. That purpose we shall not discover merely in his indictment of Germany's manner of breaking the peace and making the war. Those two crimes have indeed desolated the moral and the material world. But there are two ways of regarding them. We may take them to be the act of the entire German nation, and assume for it a universal as well as an exclusive culpability. Or we may assume them to have been in the main the work of a section of governing Germany, a "caste," a military rather than a civil bureaucracy. The wording of Mr. George's speech inclines, on the whole, to the second view, and we take it that it is substantially the right one. We should add that neither he nor any man to whom the work of the Chancelleries of the Foreign Offices of Europe is something of an open book, can heap the whole responsibility for the war on one head, or on one act of national blindness, conspicuous though we hold it to be in the general myopia of Europe. The war has issued from the union of materialism in thought with a pervading type of Imperialism in government. If, therefore, this evil is to be undone, we must look to the peace to secure two changes in the conditions of European State life. We must aim at some change of heart and some modification of structure. But we must also have regard to the unprecedented sacrifice of innocence—of the undeveloped manhood of our nation and of the Continent, who have taken no part in the national policies that made the war. We debate and we write; and every moment fall some scores of youths, all but children in years and intellect, dead, like Lycidas, ere their prime. It would be an indelible stain on statesmanship if it were to pursue this path of blood an hour longer than necessity points the way. And what, again, is that necessity? It concerns essentially the future on which in our mortal lives all the thought and work of the present are concentrated. Europe has to discover a way of international living superior to that which exposed it to the frightful shock of August, 1914. This may not yet be the conscious view of European statesmanship. But it is, we are persuaded, the line of movement along which travel the minds of millions of the sufferers and actors in the war, as compared with the spectators or the critics of it. In this sense, a spiritual League of Nations is being imperceptibly formed; and the meaning and end of the war are being more and more clearly perceived.

Let us, therefore, endeavor to read the facts of the hour in the light of this general conception of them. After nearly two years and a-half of war, and with no visible prospect of its termination, Germany has made a general offer of peace, which we may interpret, on the reading of the German Note, as a proposal to go into Conference. We may well agree with M. Briand that she would not have made this proposal if she were convinced of victory. Victorious Powers do not tender peace; and we assume that this reduced view of her future as a belligerent will find some expression in the terms on which she proposes to re-enter the Society of Nations she has broken up. It will not be fully expressed; pride, hope, the prospect of a bargain, the fear of her war extremists and annexationists, must all serve to color Germany's

first entry on negotiation. Nor, we imagine, is her offer the fruit of desperation—of her belief in the power of the Allies to destroy her. But it needs no art of divination to suppose that her statesmen see a miserable future before her as the result of a prolonged or a greatly exacerbated war. In achieving that end we may indeed half-ruin ourselves; but so long as we hold her bound in the circle of the seas there is little doubt as to our capacity to half-ruin her. Germany is not either a horde of moving immigrants with small needs and few tastes, or a self-contained land-people: she has drunk the draught of wealth and world-power. That draught only peace can restore. And that peace, again, depends largely on our will. Germany may rout Roumania, or hold us and France to the lines of her great withdrawal in the autumn of 1914. But she is not free, and she can only move within the greater or lesser lines of short commons and increasingly difficult and restricted production that the blockade imposes upon her. We conceive, therefore, that she offers peace, not because of her care for humanity (for we cannot call the author of the Belgian raids a humane Power), but because her more prudent statesmanship realizes, with the mass of her nation, that the pressure applied to her is a force ultimately destructive of her economic life.

Now this German realization may not mean the end of the war. But, emphatically, it does mean that the time has come for all the nations to measure what approach they have made to an escape from it. And, in fact, this measurement has begun. Germany has made her general tender without specific proposals. We have properly replied, first, by saying that we await the terms and guarantees she suggests, and, secondly, by restating the general principles of the treaty we are, with our Allies, prepared to negotiate. Mr. George defines these in three terms—reparation, restitution, guarantees against a repetition of the war. These are vague words; and the partisan of extreme or of moderate terms can, no doubt, set them as high or as low as he pleases. You may read, for example, into the word "reparation" the barren and impracticable idea of revenge, or give to it its proper significance of a scheme of repairs and compensation. But we will make an obvious comment. We think it fair to regard Mr. George's declaration as a connected proposition, and to link it with the Grey-Asquith view which Mr. George has formally taken over as a sign of the continuity of our general policy. The British Government has never argued for a territorial peace. It has always declared that it went to war to obtain security for the European nations, great and small, and for the erection of a system of law and custom guaranteeing it. We shall assume that though no one sane man could draw a peace on the basis of a rigid *status quo*, the great change on which our heart is fixed lies in the political more than the geographical relationships of States. On this basis, we must obviously insist that all the violated nations shall get back their sovereignty and the means of maintaining it. Those means, again, are twofold. There must be evacuation ("restitution"), indemnities ("reparation") for damage, and there must be a machinery for preventing great nations from regarding treaties with small ones as scraps of paper and their lands as short cuts to their military ambitions. It is the nature of these "guarantees" on which the character of the peace must depend. Some changes of boundaries there must be. There is much to be said for Sir Harry Johnston's plan in the "Daily News," for turning this or that portion of Asiatic Turkey into protectorates, for setting up an international control of the Dardanelles, and for establishing a Free Poland as

the joint act of Russia, Austria, and Germany. It is still more important to come to a fair award of economic facilities, sea passages, and trade outlets. For nothing in the territorial way that we propose or Germany demands can be stable unless there is some basis of international confidence and some guarantees, some soul and body of International Government, releasing Europe from the rule of mere force and the accompanying burden of armaments. Given this, we may dispense with an almost interminable war, bloody beyond even the flowing measure of our present losses, to be followed by a drastic redistribution of power (and territory) which will set the aggrieved parties scheming and arming for their *revanche*. Here, indeed, lie the seeds of an uncovenanted, unguaranteed Europe, with armies moving to fresh battles over the graves that now bestrew it.

Let us therefore take a step backward and trace the more immediate consequences of the German offer and Mr. George's response to it. For two and a-half years we have battered at the great German entrenchment. From its summit now comes an offer of parley. It is an offer in blank; made in not too inviting verbiage. It does not reveal what the German mood is; how far it has yielded to our assaults; what answer it inclines to make to the assurance conveyed through the Prime Minister's lips, that we are enemies not of her proper national life and development, but only of her interferences with the free existence and culture of others, and that our main aims are the conservative ones of restitution, reparation, guarantees of peace. That in itself is a statement; it calls for a counter-statement from Germany. When we possess that statement, we shall know not indeed whether we can get all that we want, but whether we have got enough to make it worth our while to go into Conference about the rest. We know that to one part of our demands, that for an international League of Peace, Germany, in form, assents. What is her view of our general basis of terms? Assent? Dissent? Assent in parts, dissent in others? Misunderstanding on all? We do not know, and we cannot refuse to inquire. Every hour stamps on the face of civilization the true character of this war of nations. It is, in Mr. Bonar Law's view, limitable by the very extravagance of its demands on men and women and the work of their hands. Nearly all Europe is now a "beleaguered city." Even with us everything is to be taken and everybody to be conscripted. The mass of men live not for ideas, but for a few simple objects—food, home, rest, and a little pleasure and freedom. Every hour sees a fresh curtailment of the tiny plots of ground wherein the simple live; a new act of mobilization for death, a fresh approach to a complete state of slavery to the State. The State suffers too, for world-power is being rapidly redistributed. Europe's will to fight is tilting against her the balance of force and inclining it to America; while the very nobility and lavishness of the offering of her youth reveal to her the uncounted riches that she has thrown away. That sacrifice can no longer be made to an unknown god. We must know where we stand, or the war cannot go on.

#### PARLIAMENT AND THE DIRECTORY.

THE new Government had its origin in a movement outside the House of Commons, and it is clear that it will proceed on the assumption that the House of Commons is negligible. The assumption is not so extravagant as it sounds. For a generation at least the power of the House has declined. First, the Cabinet grew at its expense, and then the inner Cabinet at the expense of the whole

Ministry. Parties submitted to a discipline of increasing rigidity, and the private member, as his opportunities of usefulness decreased, saw his status and his influence declining with his independence. The solidarity of Cabinets destroyed the control of the House by forbidding the exercise of a free vote against an incapable or wrong-headed Minister, and no alternative system of control existed, since our Parliament has been consistently blind to the advantages of the Continental system of control by committees. It is not surprising that a House on the downgrade has declined still further under the shock of the war. Its sphere had been so limited that it had ceased to think of itself as a working House. It initiated nothing. It was effectively only one thing—a platform for the opposition of the party out of office. That last function ceased morally with the truce of war-time, and formally with the creation of the Coalition. There followed a certain revival of independence, which the events of the past fortnight have for the moment eclipsed. The House no longer makes Governments: it acquiesces in the achievements of the press. The Government which has issued from this crisis betrays in its whole mechanism its divorce from the representative system. For the fact, Mr. Bonar Law has duly supplied the theoretical justification. The new Ministers, as he put it, are going to their offices "to do work," and not to "defend" what they do in the House of Commons.

The distinction implied in this illuminating sentence is very interesting. The Minister is no longer either the leader or the executive officer of the House. He is not in it or of it, a Member himself, in daily contact with its atmosphere, open to its suggestions, obliged, partly by personal intercourse, partly by the ordeal of questions, and partly by the pressure of debate, to move with its thought. The fiction that the majority of the House has a tendency and a policy is abandoned. The Minister is now either an outsider, or else a Member who is not expected to attend its sittings. He works exclusively in his Department, surrounded by bureaucrats, and he is in effect an untrained bureaucrat himself. What survives of the powers of the House is merely a recognition of its right to hear a "defence" of what is done. The defence, however, no longer necessarily involves any personal contact of the Minister with the House. It may be delegated, and clearly in many vital matters it will be delegated. The new system begins at the top. Of the five supermen who compose the Directory two are Peers, and Mr. George will not lead the House. It has retained Mr. Bonar Law as its permanent Counsel—its sentry, set on guard to protect the inner Cabal from Parliamentary snipers. He need not attend its sittings. He can have only a nominal responsibility for what it does, but this semi-detached Director will hold a brief for his fellows, and "defend" their decisions in the House.

A similar system will apply to some of the most powerful of the new departments. They will be represented by an under-secretary, a junior person, who will be entrusted with type-written formulæ, and will do his best, with imperfect knowledge, to explain the mysteries of a Department for whose decisions he has no responsibility. When this singular system is viewed in connection with the other salient fact, that none of the Chiefs of the Administrative Departments, whether new or old, have seats in the Cabinet, it is clear that the Northcliffe-George revolution means nothing less than the suspension of parliamentary government itself. It is an approach to the German system, and in some respects it is much worse than its model. The German Ministers are bureaucrats who make no pretence that they are the Reichstag's leaders or executive officers. But, at all events, the man who is responsible for a department does



meet the Reichstag in person, and faces its debates. What is more important, he must also explain himself in intimate discussion before its committees and sub-committees. The details of a budget and a bill are in this way thoroughly sifted by representatives of all the parties in the House before the Reichstag as a whole disposes of them finally. The German super-bureaucrat is not the servant of the House, but, in spite of the fact that he is not an elected Member, the system really subjects him to a far closer control than our Directors or their Ministers will submit to. If the Reichstag loses much by having to deal with a Minister who is legally not its servant, but the Emperor's, it gains something through the greater independence of its parties, which the bureaucrat neither leads nor controls.

It would be pedantic to object to innovations in war-time. The need of unity and despatch may well have justified the overhauling of our traditional machinery. The revolution of last week has, however, upset too many safeguards at once, while it nowhere gives us real promise of efficiency. The Prime Minister is no longer the leader of a party, but a powerful personality whose present actions will be governed neither by any concern for the traditions of the past, nor by any thought of the permanent standing of his group in the future. The men who surround him are not a staff with whom he acted in the past, and may not welcome his leadership when politics become normal. He is really a dictator whose momentary omnipotence is qualified only by the strangely composed council over which he presides. In that council only one man, Mr. Bonar Law, really speaks for a substantial portion of the House, and he will attend its sittings irregularly. The Cabinet, in the proper sense of the word, has disappeared. The Executive Ministers are not Mr. George's co-equal colleagues, but subordinates who may be summoned to discussions, as the chief clerks in a large firm may be summoned to consult, one by one, with the partners. It is stupefying that the vital decisions, which will end the war or prolong it indefinitely, will be taken by these four or five men alone, and that in their decisions the three Ministers who are nominally responsible to Parliament for foreign policy, the Army, and the Navy, will have only a consultative voice. The Directory, liberated from the restraint of Cabinet discussion, and divorced in great measure from contact with the House, will none the less govern it by the familiar devices of party discipline. It has a set of Whips at its service. It can threaten an appeal to an electorate which has lost all its younger voters, and it has taken power to itself to win the *arrivistes* by dispensing the patronage of an unlimited number of minor salaried offices. The experiment will be endured for a time by a House which has lost much of its old sense of its sovereign power. It will be judged in the long run by its results. A House which has allowed itself to be in great measure superseded, may in the end be less tolerant of mistakes and less patient under disappointments than it would have been towards a Government created by its own fiat, and responsible to its own control. One function only has been left to Parliament. When it is tired of hearing vicarious "defences," from Ministers with whom it cannot deal in person, it may upset the whole combination by a hostile vote.

Mr. Bonar Law's distinction between Ministers who "work" and a Parliament which listens to their "defences" is really an implicit challenge. Parliament can restore its own efficacy and its own authority only by conquering for itself a sphere of work. Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman had some idea, when he saw his great majority in 1906, of adapting the French system of Committees. The idea was revived last year when a

Parliamentary deputation met its French colleagues, and realized the immense services which these powerful and well-informed Committees had rendered to the conduct of diplomacy and the equipment of the Army. The Chamber is a working House, and French Ministers are its executive officers who carry out a policy of which even the details are discussed with the committees which revise the estimates, control the expenditure, and discuss the administration. Our House has its fate in its own hands. It has never before had to deal with a Government which ignored it so openly, but it has never had a Government so ill-equipped upon the resist any corporate demand which it might make on its own behalf. It touches in this press-made revolution the limits of its own decline if representative government is to have a future. It must do battle for the "right to work."

### THE MONEY FOR THE WAR.

AMID the varied urgency of the military and political situation, there is some danger lest the grave warning upon our financial and economic situation uttered by Mr. Bonar Law in his speech upon the Vote of Credit should miss the attention it deserves. Reminding us that the actual expenditure for the financial year is likely to exceed by a million a day the sum estimated, and will amount to the gigantic aggregate of 2,000 millions, he plainly stated his conviction that we could not continue to spend upon this scale "indefinitely." If we look facts and probabilities fairly in the face, as we ought, we shall realize that this statement has an even graver significance than at first appears. For, if our current expenditure cannot be maintained indefinitely, what is to be said of the considerably higher scale upon which we shall be called upon to enter if the war extends to the next financial year? The vote for another million men slid through Parliament unquestioned a few days ago, and though this is in large measure provision against wastage, not net addition to the fighting forces, it involves a considerable increase of net expenditure. Then, again, the two admitted causes of this year's excess beyond the estimate, the rising prices of munitions and the increasing subsidies to our Allies, are certain to continue in their operation. Nor is it only the price of munitions. The rapid rise in the prices of foods and other supplies, still going on, causes an automatic increase in military and naval expenditure. Nor can we ignore the serious burden quickly rolling up all the time in the shape of interest upon War Loans, Treasury bills, and other forms of borrowing, at rates of payment which must continually advance. Bearing these facts in mind, it would be foolish to forecast a lower rate of national expenditure than 2,500 millions for the next financial year, a sum actually larger than the most liberal estimate for the aggregate private income of our nation before the war.

Such is the bare outline of the financial situation that confronts us. So elastic have our resources shown themselves to be up to the present that they have created a blind unreasoning confidence among persons unversed in high finance that whatever happens we can stand the strain. But there are limits in sound and safe finance to progress which may involve early and disastrous penalties. Already we have strayed in two respects from the path of financial rectitude. By means of our Treasury notes and our excessive dependence on bank credit, we have inflated our currency and artificially raised prices against us. Moreover, the last twelve months have seen a perilous increase in the proportion of our dependence upon short-time loans, and a piling up of floating debt

upon a scale which every financial expert knows to be dangerous. We are glad to see that a new War Loan is now to be authorized. It should be issued upon such liberal terms as (a) to furnish an adequate sum for coming expenses; and (b) to enable the Treasury to pay off large quantities of Bills and other short loans.

When occasional criticism is passed upon our methods of financing the war, it has generally been deemed to be answer enough to point out that other belligerent nations, Germany in particular, have done worse. And this is doubtless the case. No other nation has raised by taxation anything like the sum we have raised, and all the others have plunged into an inconvertible currency which has helped to conceal the crooked modes of borrowing they have resorted to. But sound finance means more for us than for any other nation; first, because we are the financiers of the whole Alliance; and, secondly, because, as the bankers and money market of the world, we have more at stake for the future than any other nation, in the maintenance of financial stability. Under such circumstances, we cannot confront without grave disquietude the prospect of another financial year at a higher rate of expenditure and with diminished resources for meeting it. For, though our own internal income, enhanced by the distribution of high prices in heightened profits and wages, may show no diminution, it can hardly be expected to advance so as to meet the great further costs of the war. A not less serious factor is the new policy of the United States. Probably the recent advice of the Federal Reserve Board to the bankers not to increase further their holdings of our short loans is one cause of our Third War Loan, to be issued, we hope, free of income tax to foreign investors. But it must be borne in mind that our whole pecuniary and commercial relations with the foreign countries on which we depend for credit and supplies become more difficult as time goes on.

It is, in particular, our dependence upon the United States which precludes us from resorting to the temptation to follow the example of the other belligerents in going on to a paper basis and suspending our free market for gold. The damage to our national credit and our exchange which such a course would involve would make it practically impossible to continue buying from America the goods and munitions we require for our own use and that of our Allies. This is the root of error in the easy talk of those who tell us we need not worry about finance, because, after all, it is only a process of bookkeeping. Now this, in a sense, is true for Germany, which is virtually thrown upon her own internal resources for supplies. But it is untrue for Britain, and in a considerable measure for our Allies. We cannot live and fight without supplies from abroad, and we must pay for these supplies by money which the sellers will consent to take. No schemes for printing money or for duplicating loan certificates can avail us for such a purpose. For ultimately, of course, the object and the test of war finance consist in the getting hold of actual goods, munitions, food, clothing, and so forth. It may well be the case that the enormous rise in expenditure upon the war does not imply a corresponding increase in the actual quantity of goods consumed. Such a supposition, indeed, would ignore the rise of prices. But it does imply a considerable increase in material consumption.

Now this increased consumption can only be provided either by increased production within these isles, or by reduced consumption of other things. For no skill in finance will enable us to increase our supplies from foreign countries, or for any great length of time to maintain our present rate of importation. But how can we hope greatly to increase our own production of

foods and other necessaries at a time when the War Office and the Munitions Department are engaged in combing out, not merely the remaining luxury or comfort trades, but the fundamental industries like agriculture? Something can no doubt be done further to economize man-power in production of the necessary goods for war and civil use. But it will be little, and it will be late, whereas the need is large and pressing. If we are really to strengthen our financial and economic position, it can only be done by such pressure, through further processes of taxation and enforced loans, as will compel large reductions in private consumption which voluntary appeals to patriotism have so far signally failed to evoke.

### THE LESSON OF VERDUN.

THE setting of the French victory at Verdun is simple but suggestive in its relationship to the general drama of the war. For some days the French guns had been bombarding the line on both sides of the Meuse, and the enemy was on the alert for an assault. He seems to have imagined that it would be directed against the sector west of the river. Nevertheless, his line on the east had five divisions for defence, whereas only four were allowed for the attack. The results seem at first sight to be inexplicable. Only a limited element of surprise can be admitted; the Germans possessed a definite superiority in force, and yet the French took more prisoners than the enemy have anywhere lost in a single day's engagement since the war began. Two days almost doubled the number, and gave into the hands of our Ally the ridge which is the natural cover of the defences of Verdun.

On a first examination, we are tempted to infer that this is the price which Germany has paid for the campaign in Roumania, and, regarding the larger purpose of the war alone, we might well feel content. But the facts do not bear out this conclusion. There were more men, or at least more units, present on the German side than on the French. We have no evidence of any considerable withdrawal of guns. The intention of our Allies was clearly made known to the Germans. But in spite of all, there is a significant rupture in the enemy lines and a toll of prisoners equal to more than the number of rifles to a division. These facts open up a fascinating field for speculation. If we could interpret them correctly, it is possible we should achieve an inference of the first importance to the future development of the struggle on the Western front. We are, perhaps, faced with one of those moments when a highly successful form of tactics has failed to call forth the correct counter-measures. It may be that barrage is at present in the ascendant; and the depth of the screen, combined with the distance of its extreme fringes, imposes upon the enemy the necessity of keeping force in the front line, far from immediate support. Certainly the day of the assault saw no attempt to rescue the German defenders from their hapless plight, and this, while it might argue a paucity of available reserves, must mean a shrinkage in the reserves locally and immediately available. A further inquiry would lead us to even more hopeful conclusions. A breakdown in the machine there clearly was, and we may fairly deduce some failure in moral to account for it. When the artillery came into play to cover the Germans, it was several times too late, and at least once wildly premature. A terrible fusillade was opened upon Poivre Hill before the defenders had evacuated their positions, and the Germans between the two fires must have suffered very heavy losses. Almost everywhere on the battle front there was evident a lack of grip, and

while we do well not to build too much upon it, it seems impossible not to conclude that the troops were inferior, that they were shaken by the bombardment, and that they may also have been badly depleted units.

But at the end we are impelled to a conclusion that is at once less detrimental to the human material of the German Army, and more hopeful for the future. We cannot escape the conviction that the Germans have been met by a superiority in tactics, that the battle is still to the skilful. Frequently the French have achieved conspicuous results by the carefulness with which their plans are laid, and we seem to be reaching a point where success becomes more than ever calculable. There is a finish about the action of these French troops that can only come from the supreme correlation of infantry and artillery, of reconnaissance with both, and of all arms with their commanders. Although the war seems to be a problem in mechanics or applied science from one angle, or rather because we have on both sides this strange complexity of mechanical appliances, the final victory is still that of mind. We cannot hope for the same defiance of the seasons on all parts of the Western front that we see at Verdun. The ground in one place becomes a quagmire, almost a quicksand, whereas in another there is natural drainage, and the surface remains firm. Still, if we find at Verdun, which so many German sacrifices have hallowed, this failure before carefully arranged plans, this breakdown before an enlightened direction of the machinery the Germans have invoked, the probabilities are that such successes will tend to be less incidental and more general. Verdun is an important pivot of manœuvre that may yet play its part in a final victory.

### A London Diary.

LONDON, FRIDAY.

THE opening success of the new Government so far as speech-making went, was reaped not by Mr. Lloyd George, but by Lord Curzon. Mr. George's speech did not lack liveliness of construction, joined to a certain vitality of spirit. But it was over-long and thinly phrased, and its method of statement by compartments, each of them shut in with a little peroration to itself, gave it a disconnected air, and robbed it of the greater effects of artistry. Lord Curzon, on the other hand, showed a really impressive power of manner and presentation; while his effort was as near the grand style as that of his old chief, it was also a good piece of continuous thinking. But if the House was often on the point of boredom over the Premier's speech, it was also intrigued. Was it meant to shut the door to negotiation, or to leave it just ajar? The latter seemed to me the prevailing and the true interpretation. So many veils and half-veils are now drawn over men's minds, that Reality hardly shows a glimmer through them. But as the shadow of this tremendous catastrophe looms more and more darkly over our lives, statesmen shrink more visibly from the responsibility of prolonging it. A common ruin may impend over the world; shall we escape, even if we drag down Germany? I doubt whether the George speech is largely or conspicuously helpful. Its tone wanted breadth and insight, his wording clearness, as well as depth of feeling. But I think it keeps a way open for a gradual *éclaircissement* of terms, either by a mediator or by the belligerents. Do France and Russia oppose such a method? I question it.

As for the new Ministerial organization, if that is a proper term to apply to such a piece of disorderliness, I have not the smallest faith it can last. It is quite unconstitutional. Almost every characteristic mark of the Cabinet system has been torn away. Collective responsibility, the association with the Cabinet of the heads of the departments, the presence of certain Ministers, such as the Lord Chancellor and the Secretaries of State, the direct link between Parliament and the Prime Minister, all are gone. How, in particular, the King can have assented to the exclusion of the Lord Chancellor, who, says Anson, is "a necessary part of the innermost Councils of the Crown," I don't pretend to say. In a few hours a whole library of constitutional manuals has become obsolete. What remains of the Parliamentary connection, when the leader of the House of Commons, who is not the Prime Minister, is told off by his chief for "sentry go" outside the "Cabinet," which is not a Cabinet at all? And is the British Constitution so slight a thing that it collapses with one energetic rip at its covering?

BUT it is not the impropriety of the new governing machine which will bring it to grief. That is covered by our ever-expanding formula—"We are out to win the war." It is its defects as an organ of business. This point was not in any way met in Mr. George's defence. Each head of the great departments can be summoned in turn to the Cabinet, says the Prime Minister; in other words, Mr. George can ring for Mr. Balfour, ex-Prime Minister, ex-leader of the Tory Party, and Secretary for Foreign Affairs, as he rings for his boots. But why does he not sit there of right, with his administrative colleagues, present his reports, and discuss his relationships with the other heads of the kindred departments, as his predecessors have done (with the exception of the Pitt precedent) for generations of our wars? Nothing can result from the present haphazard method but overwork for the Prime Minister and continuous references and cross-references from one department to another. As for the inner Cabal, the idea of a tiny Council of super-experts is exploded. I imagine that twelve or fifteen will be nearer the average attendance than four or five. What is wanting to this always changing assembly is merely the regular bond of union which Mr. George has destroyed.

EQUALLY vain is the idea that the "business" man has come in to supersede the mere "politician." In fact, only one or two departments have been so treated. One of them, which is the Board of Trade, was in the hands of a man who could be quite properly described as an expert in one form of its "business" and a perfectly competent supervisor of most others. Now it is also disembowelled, and the parts handed over to a group of more or less competent dissectors. In another, the Local Government Board, the Presidency has been given to an able man, Lord Rhondda, who, however, knows far less of the business of his office than his predecessor, Mr. Long. For the rest there is a mere multiplication of offices and under-secretaries, and the Government, so far from being a model of simplicity, is as full of cross-roads and bye-paths as a rabbit-warren. Some reconstruction there will have to be, and M. Briand's perfectly natural grouping of the war offices in his new Cabinet offers an obvious model.

I HOPE Mr. Yeats will succeed in the crusade which that highly practical and enthusiastic citizen is carrying on to get the Lane pictures for Dublin. The facts are simple. Sir Hugh Lane, it will be remembered, had



helped to found a gallery of modern art in Dublin; but, owing to a dispute with the Dublin Corporation, he brought some of his pictures over to London and made a will leaving his private modern collection (but not his old masters) to the National Gallery. He found the trustees of the National Gallery not a whit more satisfactory than the Dublin aldermen and councillors, and, being an Irishman, he resolved that in an unsatisfactory world he had better leave his entire collection to his own country, as he at first intended. So he wrote a codicil revoking his former will and leaving Dublin the pictures, and he left this in an envelope addressed to his sister, who discovered it after his death by drowning on the "Lusitania." The trustees of the National Gallery, it seems, take the view that, as the codicil is unwitnessed, it not only is of no legal value, but that Sir Hugh cannot have finally made up his mind how to dispose of the pictures. If the codicil had been found loose among his papers, there might be some force in the argument. But why then did Sir Hugh leave it carefully addressed to his sister on the eve of a voyage of the perils of which he seems to have been keenly aware? His sister and other friends assure me that he was in many respects an unbusiness-like man of a kind likely to forget the need of having witnesses to such a document as the codicil.

MR. MORRISON DAVIDSON's death breaks a link with the older life of Fleet Street. Davidson was a Bohemian, indeed, in whom there was no guile, nor, indeed, any human quality that came near to the power or the desire to make his own fortune. He was more like a figure out of Dostoevsky than in our journalism. Here was scholarship, sincerity, honesty, passion for ideas, affection for all mankind but landlords, clothed in the garb of poverty that one personal failing (and only one) made and fitted to him. He was a sort of a saint; it would be absurd to call his weakness a sin. So much Christian love enveloped it; so tender a heart rebuked the Pharisaism amid which the successful move.

A WAYFARER.

## Life and Letters.

### THINKING FOR THE FUTURE.

DURING the last decade the claims of biology to an authoritative voice in the larger issues of public policy have been pressed with novel vigor. That matters "of life and death" should hitherto have been treated with such scant regard to any sort of ordered knowledge is a curious reflection on the art of government. But we were trying to learn. Real advances were being made in public health; feeding of school children, care committees, and maternity centres were becoming recognized activities; Commissions were investigating such questions as Divorce, Venereal Disease, and the Decline of the Birth-rate; Eugenics was beginning to make large and arrogant demands as a scientific guide of life. It is certain that when the war is over, biological considerations will press with still greater urgency upon public policy. The remnants of prudish inhibition will have been swept away, and the naked realities of the situation will rally all the resources of science and practical experience for necessary salvage work. In a volume of "Essays in War-time" (Constable), Mr. Havelock Ellis makes an exceedingly valuable contribution towards sane thinking on a number of the social problems thus rooted in biology. No man living has a better right to a

hearing, for there is no other who unites so much special knowledge of those biological roots with the broader and richer humanism needed for the application of such knowledge to the conscious conduct of life. In nothing are the qualities of this humanism better shown than in the recognition of the ways and measures in which history repeats itself, the sense of community with the past. Of this Mr. Ellis gives a singularly interesting illustration in his introductory chapter by a paraphrase of passages from the Epistles written by Erasmus, from Cambridge and London, four hundred years ago (in 1514), when young Henry VIII. had suddenly plunged into war:—

"Prices are rising every day," Erasmus declared, "taxation has become so heavy that no one can afford to be liberal, imports are hampered, and wine is scarce, it is difficult even to get one's foreign letters. In fact, the preparations for war are rapidly changing 'the genius of the Island.' Thereupon Erasmus launches into more general considerations on war. Even animals, he points out, do not fight, save rarely, and then with only those of other species, and, moreover, not like us, 'with machines upon which we expend the ingenuity of devils.' In every war, also, it is the non-combatants who suffer most; the people build cities, and the folly of their rulers destroys them; the most righteous, the most victorious war brings more evil than good, and even when a real issue is in dispute, it could better have been settled by arbitration."

But if the opinions and sentiments of a few enlightened men, like Erasmus four centuries ago, had no apparent power to influence the course of history in matters of war and peace, can we have any assurance that the wider enlightenment of our time will be effectual to this end? Or does war serve some necessary purpose in the process of civilization? Is it essential for the natural selection of "fit" nations and for the preservation of virile racial qualities? To such questions Mr. Ellis gives encouraging and confident replies:—

"War is not a permanent factor of national evolution, but for the most part has no place in Nature at all; it has played a part in the early development of primitive human society, but as savagery passes into civilization, its beneficial effects are lost, and, in the highest stages of human progress, mankind once more tends to be enfolded, this time consciously and deliberately, in the general harmony of Nature."

It is these last words that supply the note of hope and inspiration which runs through these essays. The time has come for man, consciously and deliberately, to take over from the slow, fumbling, wasteful hands of a blind Nature the guidance of his destiny. The war will force into immediate prominence the related questions of the quantity and quality of our birth-rate, the organization of hygienic and medical service upon a national basis, the new place of woman in the family, the State, and the economic system, and a great array of problems connecting human health and welfare with industry. There will be grave danger from two sources: blindly sentimental philanthropy and over-confident Socialism. These dangers can only be met by turning a free current of thought and ordered knowledge to play upon our stock notions and ideas. It is to this task that Mr. Ellis here devotes himself. The popular mind has been corrupted by false generalizations connecting insanity with genius, deploring the decline of the birth-rate as racial decadence, exaggerating on the one hand, disparaging upon the other, the mental and moral differences that go with sex. It is not only the ignorant but the so-called educated mind that is stuffed with dogmas or attractive prejudices of this order. For, unfortunately, even an elementary study of biology forms no part of the general education of any class in our nation, and the powerful emotions evoked by any issue involving sex, or the fighting instinct, play into the hands of

obscurantism and of quackery in public policy. A single illustration will suffice to explain the danger. We see many signs already of the working up of a popular propaganda for the stimulation of large working-class families. The press and the pulpit will be turned on to thunder against "race suicide," and every device which "patriotism" can discover will be exploited for the encouragement of maternity. Moralists will denounce restriction as a wicked interference with the order of nature and the divine purpose, and Governments will be invited to offer bounties and reliefs to prolific parentage. We speak of this as a policy designed to stimulate working-class fertility. For this would be its sole effect and its secret purpose. The motives we mention would have no appreciable effect upon parents of the well-to-do classes, whose restrictive policy is far too firmly rooted to yield to general exhortations or small remissions of taxation. It is the workers, constituting five-sixths of the community, who are to be induced to be fruitful and multiply. The inner meaning of the policy, covered as usual by a cloak of morality and patriotism, is quite manifest. What is wanted is a plentiful supply of cannon food upon the one hand and of submissive wage-labor on the other. For the powerful governing classes in this, as in other military states, are confronted by these two supreme necessities, an abundant annual crop of recruits for their armies, and so large a general growth of working-class population as to provide against a dangerous scarcity and a strong organization of labor. Plain reflection upon this high birth-rate policy leads to two inevitable conclusions—that it serves to feed militarism and war and to prevent democracy. Abounding population upon limited national areas has always been the chief drive towards foreign conquest and imperialism, furnishing alike means and motive for external conflicts. Large, cheap, conscript armies are the modern device for disciplining the workers, teaching them to know their place, and, in the last resort, furnishing the steel implements for repressing any serious attempt to establish working-class supremacy in industry and the State. Mr. Ellis enters into no discussion of these implications, but only concerns himself with the calm citation of nature's testimony to the part played by a lower birth-rate to the biological economy of progress:—

"Progress, roughly speaking, has proved incompatible with high fertility. And the reason is not far to seek. If the creature produced is more evolved, it is more complex and more highly organized, and that means the need for much time and much energy. The humble herring, which evokes the despairing envy of our human apostles of fertility, is largely composed of spawn, and produces a vast number of offspring, of which few reach maturity. The higher mammals spend their lives in the production of a small number of offspring, most of whom survive. Thus, even before man began, we see a fundamental principle established, and the relationship between the birth-rate and the death-rate in working order. All progressive evolution may be regarded as a mechanism for concentrating an even greater quantity of energy in the production of ever fewer and ever more splendid individuals. Nature is perpetually striving to replace the crude ideal of quantity by the higher ideal of quality."

Nor does Mr. Ellis fail to expose the crude antithesis between natural and artificial regulations, reminding us, in Shakespeare's famous words, how "Nature is made better by no mean, but Nature makes that mean"

#### THE POET OF THE ELEGY.

BORN two hundred years ago upon St. Stephen's Day, probably above a shop in Cornhill, and in what he calls a benighted age, the strangely-compounded poet Gray

can certainly show us nothing of that "pomp and prodigality of heaven" which he felt in Shakespeare and Milton. There was always about him something of the man born out of due time. A century earlier, a century later, how different not only his fame, but his power and personality might have been! In the age of the Great Rebellion, or amid the Victorian turmoil of ideas, what vigor and incitement he might have gained! It was vigor and incitement that any poet needed during the three generations between the age of Anne and the age of the Revolution, but by physical temperament and cast of mind, Gray needed them more than all. One or two men have won a place in our literature by one or two poems, but we do not call them great poets. Gray was a great poet beyond question, but how small is the result, and with what dilatory or sluggish difficulty it was produced! He lived to fifty-four. He was always "comfortably off." He never married, and, except for the health of a dearly-loved mother and some loved but rather tiresome aunts, he had no domestic or external cares. For more than thirty years he scarcely attempted to do anything but read and write, and yet this is all the great poet has to show—the *Elegy*, barely half-a-dozen *Odes*, and a few playful verses. They are what is called immortal, but how exiguous!

No form of life could have been more pernicious for such a nature as his. For it was a scholar's life, and from youth he was haunted by the scholar's melancholy. From youth he complained of a daily dullness. In an early letter (written in the same year in which the *Elegy* was begun, and quoted in Mr. Edmund Gosse's excellent treatise upon him) he laments his habitual state:—

"Mine, you are to know, is a white melancholy, or rather leucocholy, for the most part. . . . But there is another sort, black, indeed, which I have now and then felt, that has somewhat in it like Tertullian's rule of faith, *Credo quia impossibile est*; for it believes, nay, is sure of everything that is unlikely, so it be but frightful; and, on the other hand, excludes and shuts its eyes to the most possible hopes, and everything that is pleasurable; from this the Lord deliver us! for none but He and sunshiny weather can do it."

There we feel the touch which made Gray one of the best of letter-writers—the touch which reminds us of Edward Fitzgerald, so like Gray in accuracy of taste, the scholar's melancholy, slothfulness of mind, and slender but perfect production. That final smudge of a smile is very characteristic. In his letters, we see him often, like the Japanese, politely smiling at grief. Seven years later (the year before the *Elegy* took its final form) when he had settled down to a paralyzing life in Cambridge almost so permanently that a remove across a street from one college to another made an epoch in existence, and the silly disputations of a university assumed the importance of national wars, he wrote thus again about his melancholy:—

"The spirit of laziness, the spirit of this place, begins to possess even me, that have so long declaimed against it. Yet has it not so prevailed, but that I feel that discontent with myself, that *ennui* that ever accompanies it in its beginnings. Time will settle my conscience, time will reconcile my languid companion; we shall smoke, we shall tittle, we shall doze together, we shall have our little jokes like other people, and our long stories. Brandy will finish what port began."

The scholar's melancholy and the University's *ennui* did not drive him to drink, but they drove him to reading. He read intemperately as others drink, and with the same hope of escape. "To be employed is to be happy," he used truly to say, and, unfortunately, his handiest form of employment was to read. He read with no other purpose than to soothe or stupefy his melancholy. At one time he thought of editing Strabo

(for which task his keen sense of place and history well suited him); at another, Plato (though he had no special capacity for speculation); at another, the Greek Anthology (a fairly kindred subject to his own skill). But in spite of an erudition highly esteemed in Cambridge, he never accomplished anything in the way of scholarship. Though ultimately he was made a professor, he followed the University fashion of never lecturing. His reading, as Gibbon complained, was merely an acquisitive and scholastic study. He pursued it mainly as a soporific to an intangible but restless misery—as some alleviation from that melancholy which so early had marked him for her own. Horse exercise or a few years with Gibbon in the militia would probably have served him better.

Yet this slothful, dilatory, and hag-ridden scholar, limited for most of his life to the society of aunts and dons, never in love, and so fastidious that he could hardly speak, was the man who has given his country far more popular quotations, and more popular misquotations, than any other writer in our language, in proportion to the amount of his work. We need not recall them, for they flit through the mouths of all, and through many ears that never heard their inventor's name. No one would judge poetic inspiration by such a test, but still it is something thus to have endowed one's people. It gives the melancholic recluse something in common with Shakespeare and Pope, the main sources of flying quotations. It is the reward of careful thought and patient accuracy—those elements in an unerring taste, which, in our opinion slipped but once—in those applauded, but to us detestable, lines upon Henry VIII. :—

"When love could teach a monarch to be wise,  
And gospel light first dawned from Bullen's eyes."

But highly as we would rank perfection of form and meditated felicity of phrase, we find in Gray evidences of a spirit which often passes unrecognized among the truest admirers of his "style." Beneath the elegance and exquisite perfection of the words, we are sometimes conscious of a spirit lurking which never found full expression in his verse. It is a spirit of prophecy—a dim anticipation of movements to come. Through it, though but in whisper, we hear the hum of mighty workings. He seems at moments to utter the brooding soul of a world hardly yet recognized even by himself. It is a spirit bigger than accorded with the dapper and ineffectual don of Cambridge. Take the *Elegy* itself, as being best known among the poems, and expressing a new spirit most clearly. The present writer possesses an early edition of Blair's "Grave," to which is added an "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" by Mr. Gray. The editor inserts "moral, critical, and explanatory notes," and, what with mixed quotations from the Bible and Dr. Young's "Night Thoughts," he deals quite easily with Blair. But when he approaches the *Elegy* he evidently grows uncomfortable. He admits that, though far from faultless, it may afford a melancholy pleasure to an attentive and sympathizing mind, but regrets that it so little inculcates and enforces those solemn, important, and interesting reflections which a walk among the tombs is peculiarly calculated to suggest respecting *death* and a *future* state. He dislikes the line, "Each in his narrow cell for ever laid," as likely to mislead weak minds, and suggests "forgotten laid" as an emendation. As he continues the stanzas upon a humble peasantry whose useful toil Ambition should not mock, his discomfort increases, till at the line, "The short and simple annals of the poor," it relieves itself in the expostulation :—

"The rich and great have no more reason to despise  
the poor and abject than the latter have to envy the

former, as both stand equally in need of the assistance of each other; in this respect the *labor* of the one, and the *wages* of the other, may be suitably contrasted."

They may, indeed, be contrasted, and Gray was, perhaps, the very first to suggest the contrast. Between Pope's "Pastorals" and the *Elegy* there is an impassable gulf. When he wrote of those rude forefathers and their toil, Gray seemed to be feeling out towards the coming Revolution; at least so far as the aspect of Rousseau and the experience of Burns. In the *Elegy* we perceive, for the first time, perhaps, that pitying sympathy with the labored poor, mingled with an admiring respect—that revulsion of sentiment which characterized the second half of the eighteenth century, and induced such poor advance as subsequent generations can boast. Equally remarkable in a scholar of Gray's time and habit is a close and affectionate—almost a passionate—love and observation of nature. Here it is as though his spirit were feeling out towards Wordsworth. In his incomplete "Ode on Vicissitude" occurs a stanza which Mr. Gosse well says might be Wordsworth's :—

"See the wretch that long hath tost  
On the thorny bed of pain,  
At length repair his vigor lost,  
And breathe and walk again:  
The meanest floweret of the vale,  
The simplest note that swells the gale,  
The common sun, the air, the skies,  
To him are opening paradise."

During his first and only journey on the Continent he was overcome by a romantic feeling for the Alps which seems more than Byronic; it is almost Ruskinian, and in the age of Gray hardly known even to Rousseau. On his way up to the Grande Chartreuse, "I do not remember," he wrote, "to have gone ten paces without an exclamation that there was no restraining; not a precipice, not a torrent, not a cliff, but is pregnant with religion and poetry." Finer still, because less rhetorical, was his love for the Highland mountains and the English lakes, which he visited towards the end of his life. In subdued passion, his account of the lakes comes peculiarly near to Wordsworth's love of them. When we add to feelings then so unknown a strong personal delight in Norse and other primitive literature (some of which he translated almost in the style of Scott), we may see that this fastidious and elegant scholar's mind contained elements of power scarcely revealed and never fulfilled in the thin volume of his "remains." We here perceive a nature which we rightly called strangely compounded. We enter the presence of a spirit which appears big with promise, and ready at any moment to burst into a sudden blaze, but which, by the evil fate of time, lacked the vigor and incitement needed for the kindling.

## Short Studies.

### MY VISIT TO GERMANY.

#### IV.—AUTOCRACY VERSUS DEMOCRACY.

BY MADELEINE DOTY.

I HAD been in Berlin two weeks. I wanted to see other portions of Germany. I learned there was to be an official tour for journalists. I went to the German Press Bureau. "Could I visit some prison camps?" I inquired. "If you let me and I find they are good, I shall be glad to say so." The young man in charge of the German Press is keenly intelligent. He represents the civil authorities—the von Bethmann-Hollweg group. There is a vast difference between the civil and military authorities. The civil are much more liberal. They are eager to send news to America. I was told of a nine-day



tour, which included a visit to two prison camps, and invited to join the expedition. These trips are magnificent feats in German propaganda. An intelligent director conducts a group of reporters through the country. All expenses are paid, and the journalists fêted and feasted. It is hard to view Germany impartially when fed on champagne. I delayed my departure for a day. It was the moment of the Liebknecht trial, and I wished to be present in case of an uprising. Also by this postponement I avoided the special car assigned to the journalists, and could pay my own railroad fare to Karlsruhe.

Berlin had been very interesting. I was loath to leave. As I came back to the Adlon for afternoon tea, there was a great crowd around the entrance. A person in much gold braid and military trappings stood in the hallway. A hushed awe pervaded the place. Even the American reporters were humbly cringing in corners. The Royal Princess was upstairs. She and others of the nobility were on their way to a funeral. A Russian officer, who had intermarried with the German nobility, had been killed at the front, and the relatives were attending his funeral. Having had tea and readjusted their veils, the royal party descended. The ladies were in deepest mourning, their veils so thick that not a speck of face was visible. A sacred circle surrounded them, into which no one stepped. The crowd was pushed back.

Carlyle and his clothes theory flashed upon me. These people were just a bundle of clothes. How much heart and brain lay beneath? If only one could dress royalty in bathing suits, it would be easier to form estimates. Outside were shining carriages, fat and prancing horses (the only fat horses in Berlin), and spick-and-span liveried servants. A silent crowd watched the entrance into the coaches. But it pressed up close to this bit of luxury. I wondered if the Princess could see, through her black veil, the pale, thin faces peering into the carriage windows.

Next day was the Liebknecht trial. No paper announced it, but word had been passed to me by the Social Democrats. That day I was up early. I took a taxi and drove round and round the big grim barracks, where Liebknecht was said to be imprisoned. But all was still. No crowd gathered. There was no royal ceremonial for this brave spirit. Bitterly disappointed by the lack of demonstration, I sought out some Social Democrats. They were Liebknecht's intimate friends. I took two taxis and three trams to elude spies, jumping from one to another. These Radicals were as disappointed as I that nothing had occurred. The factory workers were to have made a protest. A large body was to have gone on strike. A little leaflet stating time and place for the demonstration was to have been distributed, but the leaflet failed to arrive. A big package reached Berlin, but when it was opened it contained a soldier's uniform. The Government had gotten wind of the plot and seized the leaflets, substituting the uniform. No one dared make inquiries. It would have meant imprisonment.

Few people outside Germany know of the extensive revolt carried on by the Radicals. The day of Liebknecht's imprisonment 5,500 workers in one munition factory alone, just outside Berlin, went on strike for the entire day. There were similar protests throughout the country. A detailed statement was given me, but I dared not carry such literature about.

The Liebknecht following grows. The workers more and more flock to his standard to the infinite dissatisfaction of the major wing of the Social Democratic Party. The demonstration that caused Liebknecht's arrest will go down in history. Several thousands were gathered in Leipszigerstrasse and Potsdamerplatz. They had come to talk peace. But when Liebknecht appeared, a mighty shout went up from a thousand throats: "Hurrah for Liebknecht!" Liebknecht raised his hand for silence. Then, steadily, though knowing the cost, he said: "Do not shout for me; shout rather that we will have no more war. We will have peace—now." Two young women standing near pulled his sleeve. "Don't," they begged, "it means the end for you." But the crowd had taken up the cry. "We will have peace

now." It went echoing down the street in a mighty roar. Police were already at Liebknecht's side. He smiled at the young women and said: "Never mind, I am the best victim." But he was not the only victim. The two young women who had never before met Liebknecht, and had taken no part in the demonstration, are to-day also in prison.

The number in prison is astounding. In Stuttgart four hundred are serving terms. There are corresponding numbers in all big cities, but I cannot be sure enough of my memory to quote accurately. But these victims are not suffering in vain. The military authorities clap every Liebknecht Radical behind the bars; but they cannot stop the growing popular demand for peace. They dare not. The major wing of the Social Democratic Party have taken advantage of this. Throughout Germany, under their auspices, peace meetings are being held. Everywhere people are signing a petition for peace, on the basis of the *status quo* before the war. As long as the demands are kept to this, peace meetings are tolerated. Not to permit them would be fatal. There is a low, ominous murmur rising from the people.

Most of the leaders of the Liebknecht groups are in prison, but the followers fight on. No longer openly because they fear prison, but quietly and insidiously. Gradually they are spreading revolt among the workers. The spirit of freedom is abroad in Germany. It can never again be wholly crushed.

Present among the group of Social Democrats with whom I talked was the young daughter of a prominent member. Her father is at the front. He was snatched up and sent there despite all protest. "Thank God, I'm near-sighted," he said; "naturally I will never kill anyone, and my failure to land a bullet may be mistaken for bad eyesight, in which case I will get back to you." His sixteen-year-old daughter is as vivid and radiant as a spring morning. She is in the thick of the work her father left. Not long ago she and five hundred young people, boys and girls, between the ages of thirteen and twenty had a demonstration. It was a holiday, and they went to the country for a day of comradeship. Toward evening, when the setting sun added its glow to those young and fearless faces, they came marching back along the country road singing the "Marseillaise." Over them they bore a banner, which read: "We are the young guard of the proletariat." They passed only one policeman on their entry into the city. He was helpless before this indomitable five hundred. He could make no arrests, but he ordered them to disband. Many of the young girls were clad in gymnasium costume. The policeman was horrified. In factories and subways everywhere women wear bloomers, but this shocked policeman shuddered to see young girls with pigtailed so clad. The young crowd surrounded the officer gaily. Laughter was on their lips, humor shone in their eyes as they gave out wrong names and wrong addresses. For a painful hour with furrowed brow the worried official wrote busily. To this day he is still hunting for those unladylike young women.

It was with reluctance I took leave of this little Radical group. It was late evening when I reached the Adlon. A spirit of excitement and tenseness pervaded the street. It had all day. Policemen lurked on every corner. An unusual number of spies were abroad. It was evident the Government feared an uprising. But it had planned a judicious stroke. For some time there had been rumors that the "Deutschland" was back in Bremen. But if it was, the Government suppressed the fact. It kept that sugar plumb for a psychological moment.

That evening, when all thoughts were turned toward Liebknecht's fate, seemed the needed moment. As I came down "Unter den Linden," a news-sheet was slipped into my hand. These leaflets were being distributed broadcast *gratis* by the "Berliner Morgenpost." In splashing black letters across the page was—"U Boat 'Deutschland' eingetroffen—An Bord Alles Wohl." A little thrill coursed through me. It was magnetic and contagious. Life and color came to the eye of spy, pedestrian, and soldier alike. This was a deed of which all Germany could be proud. It bound all together.

Temporarily, steps grew light and heads went up. It was interesting to note the difference in effect produced by this news and that of the sinking of the "Lusitania."

I was in Berlin a year ago, just after the "Lusitania" disaster. Then the crowd was excited, angry, and sullen, doggedly determined to make the world think that act justifiable. But no pride shone from their eyes. The "Deutschland" news was different. It was as though a great gust of self-respect had flooded the nation. Next morning, hidden in the back sheets of the papers, was a tiny paragraph of six lines announcing that Liebknecht had been sentenced to four years' imprisonment with hard labor. But sprawled over the entire paper in great black letters was the "Deutschland's" story. It was hard to riot against a Government that had just done something of which all were proud.

## Letters to the Editor.

### THE TASK OF THE OPPOSITION.

To the Editor of THE NATION.

SIR,—May I attempt to follow up the general lines of the excellent letter which appeared in your last issue under the heading, "The Task of the Opposition," by trying to draw up, if only for the purposes of discussion, a definite programme which shall present this task in concrete terms?

In some ways Mr. Lloyd George has done Liberalism a service in freeing it from the necessity of compromise with Toryism—a compromise which was the root-cause of the delays and indecisions so cunningly used to put an end to the Coalition. Liberalism is no longer bound to pretend that it is nothing but a faint echo of Tory bureaucracy; the relief from the burden of office may bring about a spiritual renovation which shall rid us of compromise and evasions, and bring to birth a new Liberalism, clear-sighted and remorseless in its aims.

Mr. Asquith has pledged his party to "do nothing to hinder the Government in the effective prosecution of the war." In view of this pledge, the task of Liberalism lies chiefly in the future; for the present it is bound not to make any serious or effective protest against the steady incursions of bureaucracy and militarism which are threatened by the new Government. Even Mr. Asquith's promise, however, will not prevent a determined resistance to any attempt to introduce industrial conscription on the German model; since the best part of Liberalism would not acquiesce in the imposition of a measure which would mean nothing else than the final defeat, so far, at least, as this country is concerned, of the ideals for which we entered the war.

But in the nature of things, Liberalism must devote the greater part of its effort to preparing for the period of reconstruction after the war. "The War after the War" will not be waged between nations, or groups of nations, on an economic battlefield; it will be a civil war in all countries between the worshippers of "Machtpolitik" and those who believe that there are other and finer ideals than universal militarism and unlimited and remorseless competition. In Germany, the battle is raging now; the Socialists have already won the promise of a "new orientation" of politics towards the left, and a definite pledge of the reform of the Prussian franchise, for long a symbol of the complete dominance of the conservative and reactionary elements. In this country the battle has hardly been joined; and the first issue will probably be the question of demobilization. Liberals must face squarely the difficulties of the reconstruction of society after the war; and they must be prepared, when the time comes for the reinstatement of the disbanded armies in industry, to see to it that the economic interests of the workers, and the recognition of their individuality, are not lost sight of either in the adoption of a scheme of Prussian "efficiency" or in the chaos that will result if no measures are thought out in time to meet the emergency. And if we are not to find that in freeing Germany from militarism we have ourselves shouldered the burden, Liberalism must be determined to insist on an immediate repeal of the Conscription Act; it must win an immediate extension of the franchise to women; and it must have the courage to insist on the full recognition

of "the rights of small nations"—even where, as in Ireland, the recognition of those rights is not to the interests of Tory Imperialism. And, not the least of the tasks that confront Liberalism, the British Constitution, now in abeyance, must be restored. Habeas Corpus, and the rights and liberties for which our fathers fought through centuries, must be reclaimed in a few months—or not at all.

Finally, Liberalism must take its part in the re-shaping of the outside world after the war. In international politics, our aim must be to translate into terms of fact the ideals for which we claim to be fighting. Mr. Asquith and Lord Grey have realized that the idea of the American scheme for "a League of Nations" embodies in concrete terms the "principles of public right" for which we declared war: it is for them, and for those who, with eyes unclouded by the venom of the press, see in them the real inheritors of the historic English genius in politics, to see to it that as a nation we live up to the noble profession of faith that we have made.—Yours, &c.,

R. B. R.

December 19th, 1916.

### CABINET GOVERNMENT.

To the Editor of THE NATION.

SIR,—Government by Cabinet, which is a leading feature of our Party System, after having for years proved itself futile and dangerous in times of Peace, has now shown itself utterly hopeless under the stress of War. The dogma of the Unity of the Cabinet is by itself enough to ensure this result. That nothing of importance may be done, or even be proposed to the House, without the concurrence of the whole Cabinet is ridiculous even under a Party Government; but under a Coalition, where half the Ministers have diametrically opposite ideals and points of view from the other half, the only possible result is paralysis. Even the "Inner Cabinet" (an invention of recent years, and an admission of the futility of the orthodox method) is quite impracticable in the case of such a Coalition.

There are, indeed, only two ways of escape from the present position: one is towards Autocracy, and the other is in the direction of Democracy. In this critical time we see France—a country struggling along the road to Democracy—doing fairly well. She has Standing Committees, or "Commissions," one for each of the chief Departments of State, with their members appointed from each of the various parties in the House. These Commissions keep themselves fully informed as to what is going on and are of great assistance to the responsible Ministers, besides reporting progress to the House at intervals. It is noteworthy that although these Commissions were abolished at the beginning of the war, it was found necessary to reappoint them within a few months.

On the other hand, Russia and Germany have chosen the path of Autocracy—or had it forced upon them—and Autocracy can always present the appearance of Unity.

Only poor old England, ever hesitating between Democracy and an Oligarchy which easily develops into Autocracy, has fallen between two stools. At the present moment the decision seems to be in favor of Autocracy, and good may come out of this if it induces the people to think the subject out—to condescend to consider first principles and to make a definite choice as to which goal they prefer.

I am sanguine enough to believe that the choice eventually will have to be towards Democracy, and that will mean the abolition of the Party System and the Cabinet and the substitution of Parliamentary Government. The first tentative step in that direction must be the appointment of these Departmental Commissions which have been several times demanded in the House of Commons during the last few years and as often refused. Such a Commission for the Foreign Office, for instance, would be the death-blow to Secret Diplomacy, which has, even in the last two years, sown the seeds of future wars between Italy and the Southern Slavs, and made it necessary for us to carry on the present war until the ambitions of Russia are satisfied.

The only way to get rid of the evils of Government by Party and by Secret Cabinet is to lay the foundations of Parliamentary Government and take away once for all the taunt thrown at our "private members" that they are "as out of date and as useless as the buttons on the back of a

gentleman's coat." Incidentally, we may thus also abolish Government by the Press, and if we adopt Adult Suffrage, and look to Switzerland rather than to Germany for political hints, we may definitely set out on the road to Democracy.—Yours, &c.,

E. MELLAND.

Hale, Cheshire. December 11th, 1916.

### THE ECONOMIC INTERPRETATION OF HISTORY.

*To the Editor of THE NATION.*

SIR,—In your last issue the reviewer of M. Louis Madelin's work on the French Revolution says about Karl Marx's economic interpretation of history: "If one grants that in normal times the economic factors are the chief of all the shaping forces of history, the fact remains that, in periods of emotional exaltation, idealism may for a moment be sovereign."

Undoubtedly Marx, too, would have allowed that fact to remain; the good words "for a moment" would have pleased him especially. But even if "idealism" and disinterested "virtue" had remained sovereign for several moments, I do not think that either would threaten his favorite theory. He would search for an economic explanation of that particular outburst of "emotional exaltation" at those particular moments; and, as everybody knows, he has, in his "Communist Manifesto," given an interpretation of the popularity of Rousseau's writings in France at the end of the eighteenth century, viz., the interests of free Competition against Feudalism.

Probably the victories of Feudalism over the ancient economic systems of Europe were also accomplished amidst great "emotional exaltation" and with many instances of supreme "idealism," if, very likely, of a somewhat different color from that of Rousseau's Franco-Swiss brand. Who, again, could be blind to all the well-substantiated instances of disinterested "virtue," shown in Greece and Carthage and Rome, during the Crusades, the great Spanish expeditions, the campaigns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries between Catholics and Protestants—up to the Russo-Japanese and the present Great War?

Marx's question is, as far as I can judge, simply this: Which were the economic interests behind? Far from denying outbursts of "idealism" and "virtue," he accepted them as historical facts, needing an economic interpretation. Does the writer of "The Bigness of the Revolution" consider that alone "a tyrannous obsession," holding, perhaps, that disinterested idealism as "an active force" (as distinct from crude personal "selfishness") may serve no economic interests? Or has he any particular historians in his mind when he asserts that the economic interpretation of history "may become" tyrannous? The present state of historical writing seems not to suggest any such danger.

But perhaps Marx is secretly soaking through. And in that case your contributor's preparedness against the possibility of tyranny, while it is yet time, may be a very wise attitude.—Yours, &c.,

HERBERT IVERSEN.

Pateley Bridge, W. Yorks.  
December 17th, 1916.

### THE FRENCH COLONIES AND THE WAR.

*To the Editor of THE NATION.*

SIR,—Whilst we are beginning to remove some of the misunderstandings which contributed to the war, may I suggest that the point about the French Colonies should be reconsidered? It is true, of course, as said in your hope-giving article on "A Break in the Clouds," that the German Chancellor on July 29th, 1914, said that he was "unable to give a similar undertaking" about the French colonies to that he was ready to give about the integrity of France; but in August, 1914, the German Ambassador in London went beyond the Chancellor's offer, by suggesting "that the integrity of France and her Colonies might be guaranteed" as the price of our neutrality. This Lord Grey refused, saying that "we must keep our hands free." (White Paper No. 123.) Therefore, the statement in your article that "we, the friends of France, were invited to sign away her

colonies as the price of our immunity from the risks and sufferings of war" ought, perhaps, in fairness, to be somewhat qualified. Lord Grey, on August 26th, said that these suggestions had been made as the personal suggestions of the German Ambassador without authority; but, he added, that they were carefully considered by the Cabinet on Sunday, August 2nd, 1914. They were not peremptorily rejected as impossible. It seemed at the time as if the German Ambassador could not have raised his offer for our neutrality by a further offer of the integrity of the French Colonies without authority from Berlin, and it now appears from the Chancellor's speech that he had this authority. It is a point that, in the interests of history, requires more elucidation.—Yours, &c.,

J. A. FARRER.

Ingleborough, Lancaster.

### MR. WATTS-DUNTON AND MR. WATSON.

*To the Editor of THE NATION.*

SIR,—The Life and Letters of Theodore Watts-Dunton" contains this statement in the course of a personal impression contributed by Mr. J. L. Lambe: "Mr. William Watson said comparatively recently that all he knew about poetry he had learned from Watts-Dunton's articles in the 'Athenaeum.'"

Mr. Watson has written to us declaring that the statement is entirely without foundation.

As joint authors of the biography we wish to express our sincere regret that Mr. Watson should have been caused any annoyance, and we will see that in all future editions the passage objected to shall be omitted.—Yours, &c.,

THOMAS HAKE.

ARTHUR COMPTON-RICKETT.

December 19th, 1916.

## Poetry.

### THE TRAVELLERS.

THE kings have trod  
Near lands and far,  
But gained no rest  
Beneath their star.

The kings have sailed  
The great salt seas,  
But to no haven  
Have won from these.

The kings have travelled  
The globe of thought,  
But never found  
The Thing they sought.

Like foolish men,  
In truth most wise,  
These pilgrims fare  
To Paradise.

Year after year,  
Day after day,  
These wayfarers  
Still seek the Way.

They reach their goal  
In a good hour,  
The Tree of Life  
Is all in flower.

Their journey ends  
In the ox-stall;  
They find at last  
Their God and All.

R. L. G.



## The World of Books.

THE "NATION" OFFICE, THURSDAY NIGHT.

THE following is our weekly selection of books which we commend to the notice of our readers:—

- "Figures of Several Centuries." By Arthur Symons. (Constable. 7s. 6d. net.)  
 "François Villon: His Life and Times." By H. De Vere Stacpoole. (Hutchinson. 6s. net.)  
 "The Issue." By J. W. Headlam. (Constable. 2s. 6d. net.)  
 "Comrades in Arms." By Captain Philippe Millet. (Hodder & Stoughton. 3s. 6d. net.)  
 "The Thrush and the Jay." By Sylvia Lynd. (Constable. 5s. net.)  
 "A Feast of Lanterns." Rendered with an Introduction by L. Cranmer-Byng. (Murray. 2s. net.)  
 "Hatchways." By Ethel Sidgwick. (Sidgwick & Jackson. 6s.)

THIS is the season of catalogues. They come by every post—catalogues of wines and spirits, of cigars and cigarettes, of things to eat and things to wear, and of those articles, cursed alike by him who gives and him who receives, that are manufactured for no other purpose than to be given away as Christmas presents. In this horrid waste of catalogues there are some which I always receive with satisfaction—catalogues of books. Those that come from the second-hand dealers are perhaps the most satisfactory, but publishers of new books are beginning to see the value of catalogues, and two have been issued this year that deserve special commendation. One is a little anthology-catalogue of poetry published by Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson. It gives not only the titles and prices of the books, but a selection from the poems that these books contain. As far as I know, this is a new departure upon which Messrs. Sidgwick & Jackson are to be congratulated. The other catalogue is a handsome volume of more than five hundred and fifty pages of close print. It gives a subject-catalogue as well as an alphabetical list of the publications of the Oxford University Press, and it is without doubt the most useful catalogue that has ever been issued by a single firm. Its compilers, who have benefited by the assistance and advice of many scholars, have not found it possible to include all that they wished in the way of description of the contents of books. Still, in their own words, "where the inveteracy of popular error has seemed to demand it, a note or a hint sufficient for the judicious reader has been given."

GREAT is the value of catalogues in the world of books. To assert, as has been done, that they are "the true textbooks of literature," is, I think, making too high a claim. Yet "the sort of title-page and colophon knowledge"—to use Southey's phrase—which they supply is not to be despised. We can quote the great authority of Dr. Johnson in support of this. When he and Sir Joshua Reynolds went to dine with Owen Cambridge at Twickenham, Boswell tells us:—

"No sooner had we made our bow to Mr. Cambridge, in his library, than Johnson ran eagerly to one side of the room, intent on poring over the backs of the books. . . . Mr. Cambridge, upon this, politely said, 'Dr. Johnson, I am going, with your pardon, to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books.' Johnson, ever ready for contest, instantly started from his reverie, wheeled about and answered, 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries.'"

CATALOGUES of books are not mere lists of saleables, as Leigh Hunt has pointed out, but have their human and even their ethical aspect. That rather tiresome if enthusiastic bibliographer, Thomas Frognall Dibdin, informed readers of his "Library Companion" that from beginning to end he never lost sight of what he considered to be its most material object, "namely, the imparting of a moral feeling to the gratification of literary taste." We are content with catalogues which offer less than this, yet I imagine that most readers share something of Leigh Hunt's emotion as they turn over the pages of a catalogue of books:—

"The very titles run the rounds of the whole world, visible and invisible; geographies—biographies—histories—loves—hates—joys—sorrows—cockeries—sciences—fashion—and eternity! We speak on this subject from the most literal experience; for often and often have we cut open a new catalogue of old books, with all the fervor and ivory folder of a first love; often read one at tea; nay, at dinner; and have put crosses against dozens of volumes in the list, out of pure imagination of buying them, the possibility being out of the question."

And old Isaac D'Israeli is no less enthusiastic, if more philosophical:—

"There are few things by which we can so well trace the history of the human mind as by a classed catalogue, with dates of the first publication of books; even the relative prices of books at different periods, their decline and then their rise, and again their fall, form a chapter in the history of the human mind; we become critics even by this literary chronology, and this appraisal of auctioneers. The favorite book of every age is a certain picture of the people. The gradual depreciation of a great author marks a change in knowledge or taste."

BIBLIOGRAPHY is, of course, but a name for the science of cataloguing, and my grievance against the majority of bibliographies is that they tell me everything about a book except what I want most of all to know. Learned men have spent an infinity of time and trouble in ascertaining and recording the dates of editions, the number of pages, the size, the mistakes in printing, and so forth, but for some obscure reason they consider it outside their province to give any notion of the contents or any estimate of the worth of the books they describe. Or they satisfy themselves with bald enumerations of authors, titles, and dates. Take, for example, the bibliographies at the end of the volumes of "The Cambridge Modern History" and "The Cambridge History of English Literature." All of them are the work of authorities on their respective subjects, and nobody can deny their usefulness. How greatly would that usefulness be increased if these authorities told us something about the merits or demerits of the books they mention! I find, for example, sixty pages of books about the French Revolution, and twenty-seven of books about Scott and Byron; but if I wish to make a selection among the best of these, I am thrown upon my own unaided resources.

CATALOGUES of best books are less helpful than numerous. One of the most famous is Comte's "Positivist Library," intended "to guide the more thoughtful minds among the people in their choice of books for constant use." It numbers about 270 works by 140 authors, and it is safe to say that, since Comte, no human being has ever read them all. Another French list that has come my way is M. Henri Mazel's "Ce qu'il faut lire dans sa Vie." It goes upon the principle of assigning certain classes of books to certain years of a man's life. Modern poets and novelists are to be read by those between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four; the great foreign poets, the French classics, and the ancient historians, between twenty-five and thirty-one; and so on, until the hardened reader of from fifty-three to fifty-nine prepares for a future world by studying the great religious writers. So much precision in guidance seems less suited to the Latin temperament than to the docility before authority which we now accept as a German characteristic.

IN this country, the late Lord Avebury as well as a passion for statistical symmetry have decreed that catalogues of best books shall be limited to a hundred volumes, or, failing this, to ten or some multiple of ten. Here, again, what is one man's meat is another man's poison, and books that have helped some have undoubtedly hindered others. An American writer, Mr. S. M. Crothers, has hit upon the idea of a catalogue of the hundred worst books. Its compilation would, he holds, offer a fascinating field for difference of opinion, and it would inform the reader what not to read, just as the lighthouse and the bell-buoy inform the mariner where not to go. It would, of course, be outside the power of anybody to make a list that would command universal acceptance, but if a committee were appointed on which novelists pronounced on novels, poets on poetry, theologians on works of theology, and so forth, the resulting catalogue would be a lively addition to the world of books.

PENGUIN.

## Reviews.

### THE DISCOVERY OF INDIA.

"Hungry Stones and Other Stories." By RABINDRANATH TAGORE. (Macmillan. 5s. net.)

"Fruitgathering." By RABINDRANATH TAGORE. (Macmillan. 4s. 6d. net.)

THERE remains to be written a rather important chapter in the history of India—its discovery by the English people. It remains unwritten for the best of all reasons. It is still an event of the future. None the less each generation has made its own attempt upon the veil. This event happens, we suspect, for each of us at a comparatively early age. India is for every English boy the region of romance, and if the historian of our dealings with the Indian people ever means to go to the root of the matter, he will ask himself at each phase of our policy, What notions of India had the Anglo-Indians then ruling framed for themselves between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one? One generation was reared on the essays of Macaulay. Another must have formed itself in the pervading Indian atmosphere that colors half the work of Thackeray. For Thackeray the English ruling class was first of all the class which sent soldiers and collectors to India. The modern period begins, we suspect, with Max Müller, and after him came Kipling, and at length Tagore. It happened to us in our school-days that we read Max Müller with immense avidity. He set us dreaming continually of India. He made our horizon for us with his revelations of the origin of the Aryan languages and the primitive structure of Aryan society. We conceived from his pages an almost oppressive veneration for the intellect of the Hindoo race, and the traditions of the Brahman caste. We visualized the difficulty of British rule in India in terms of the contrast between our practical outlook on life and their profound metaphysical vision. We recollect a moment of awe-stricken modesty when our schoolmaster tried to dazzle our ambition with the Indian Civil Service. We did not feel in ourselves the subtlety and the depth of intellect required to rule this race of philosophers and saints. The impression, as notions fixed in early youth are apt to be, was lasting. We tried very hard to read the Vedas. We endeavored to master Indian systems of logic and metaphysic. We turned hopefully to Fergusson's monumental books on Indian architecture. The result was invariably disappointing, and from the poems the systems and the buildings we always rose with a sense of confusion and bewilderment. In all of them it was precisely the power of the shaping and constructive intellect which seemed to be wanting. Opulence, variety, subtlety, detail, there were in abundance, but never the compelling, masterful power of creative reason. We were baffled, but we clung to the conviction that the failure to appreciate was a fault in our own Western make-up. Everyone agreed that Indians are sages and metaphysicians.

At last we dare to revise this Late-Victorian belief. The suspicion dawns upon us that the singularity of the Indian mind may lie not at all in any over-powering intellectual gift, but, on the contrary, on its emotional side. We have found the clue in these tales by Sir Rabindranath Tagore. They are admirable tales, varied and in many manners, and all of them are told with sure and delicate art. But it is not the discovery of a new artist of short stories which matters most. The big event is the revelation by an Indian of Indian modes of feeling. In all of these tales, some romantic, some decorously comic, some gently satiric, and others tragic and moving, the arresting thing is less the art, of the writer than his revelation of the delicacy and power and purity of Indian emotion. We do not mean to undervalue the art, but it does not strike us as characteristically Indian. We should doubt whether short stories at all like these were written in Bengali before the study of Western models. The manner and technique are only faintly exotic, and while they did not pointedly recall any English practitioner of the short story, they often reminded us of Daudet, and suggested a familiar nineteenth-century attitude which was rather French than English. The people of the tales, however, are neither English nor French nor anything in the least European. Universal humanity

there is, to be sure, in the sense that we can readily understand these people, and like them. But there is not one tale which could be "adapted," so to speak, for the English stage, and it is not climate or institutions which would baffle the adapter, but simply this delicacy and simplicity and intensity of feeling which one finds in no Western fiction—not even in Russian fiction, half-Eastern though it is.

If Englishmen have not suspected that this emotional refinement and power were the characteristics of Indian life, the reason is, we suppose, that the home life of India was closed to us, partly by our own prejudices and partly by the Zenana. Most of these stories turn on the relations of men and women, generally of husband and wife. In one the complication is caused by polygamy, in another by caste, and in a third by the peculiar devotion felt to the spiritual teacher (the guru). But all this strange environment serves only to illustrate the beauty and spiritual delicacy of the Hindoo woman's modes of acting and feeling. It is hard to illustrate the point without actually telling the stories—a detestable practice in a review. But no one instance would suffice. The thing runs all through the book, in the manner of speech of these women, as well as in what they do, in their attitude towards each other, as well as in their dealings with men. None of them are described as "educated" in the Western sense; none of them are "intellectuals"; all of them are leading the correct Eastern home life behind the veil. The author none the less ascribes to them a keenness of spiritual vision and a sensitiveness which in the West would be found only in rare exceptions. Probably Mr. Bertrand Russell was right when he said that while the ideal life of comradeship and equality of the future between men and women may be beautiful, the definitely accepted notion of subjection and devotion which once was ours, and is still the East's, is much more beautiful than anything that belongs to the stages of transition and struggle. But this general sense of kindness and refinement, with a power of unselfish devotion, goes far beyond the relations of men and women. Three of the stories show various phases of the Indian love for children, and illustrate it with wonderful charm. These people are evidently not intellectual giants, but they have a quick, natural gift of emotion which makes our Western life of the feelings seem crude and poor, and a little vulgar by comparison.

"All this is pure fallacy," the reader may object; "you mistake a poet's picture of life for life itself. The delicacy is in Tagore, and not in his countrymen." The same question occurred to us at every page. But, in the first place, Tagore is not an isolated mind which made itself. He is a product of Indian civilization. In the second place, poets are not given overmuch, when they turn to real life, to painting it in colors of unreal beauty. They commonly ask so much from the world that they find the real ugly and unsatisfying. From Shelley to Rupert Brooke there is hardly one modern English poet who would have painted English men and women in such colors, if he had written prose tales. Wordsworth alone might have done it, and then only for peasants. Moreover, there are in two or three of these tales signs that Tagore can adopt a shrewdly humorous attitude towards life. His gentle satire at the expense of a Hindoo magnate who licked the boots of English officials has a sense for the weaknesses of men, without a touch of cynicism, which reminds us of Daudet. The satire on the island of cards is also the work of a man by no means disposed to idealize reality unduly. We incline to think that the real discovery of India may come from such work as this. If there are more novels and tales of this quality in the Indian vernaculars, the translation of them would be the greatest of all steps towards a comprehension by the West of the East. An enlightened government would subsidize a publisher to do it—but we can hardly suppose that a subsidy would be needed. This book is so fresh, so living, and so attractive that even without the author's great reputation it would have stood out in any list of fiction.

We have left ourselves little space in which to speak of the new volume of Tagore's poems. They have all his customary grace and spiritual insight. They impressed us, we confess, less than his first volume, for his manner seems to become slighter and more indefinite, and the likeness of

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poem to poem is so great that when one has read a few one seems to have read all. What lingers in the memory when one closes the book is not any one poem, or even single phrases, but a vague and beautiful sense of an attitude towards life. That pervades "Fruitgathering" like its predecessors, fragrant, intangible, and a little formless, like the scent of an invisible flower. Once more, it is not intellect that India gives to the world, but emotion.

#### A POET'S CRITICISM.

"Retrogression and Other Poems." By WILLIAM WATSON.  
(Lane. 3s. 6d. net.)

THE former half of this volume is styled by its author "Poems of the Literary Life." It is in effect a critical protest against some tendencies of the modern Muse, and handles in verse the same theme with which the author's "Pencraft" deals in prose. For criticism in the form of poetry there is ample precedent. Dryden and Pope supply familiar examples, Pope went so far as to describe Vida, no very lively predecessor in the same field, as "immortal." Mr. Watson's wrath is stirred by deliberate disregard of form, by what he stamps as "the loose-lipped lingo of the street," and by the desire of ornament for its own sake. He cries out for "the comely phrase, the well-born word," and chooses as his models Dryden, our greatest man of letters, and Gray, who said to Beattie: "If there is any excellence in my own numbers, I have learnt it wholly from that great poet." Dryden, in Mr. Watson's view, is the pattern of restraint and Gray of pellucidity.

This choice of authorities is somewhat unexpected. It is true that Dryden does not exceed in ornament, and he thus fulfils one of Mr. Watson's requirements, but, as his prologues and epilogues show, his verse did not always eschew the lingo of the street. Nor do we feel sure that Mr. Watson would pass such a phrase in more serious work as:—

"The sons of Belial had a glorious time,"

unless, indeed, he contends that it has since lost caste. Moreover, we confess to some hesitation in trying to identify those contemporaries of the master whom Mr. Watson accuses of:—

"gathering each  
Full-bosomed apple and buxom peach  
That odorous in the orchard burned."

We must hope that Herrick and Marvell and Waller, all somewhat older than Dryden, do not fall under the condemnation. Again, while the fine lines in which Mr. Watson describes Gray's "Bard" are apposite and welcome, it is less easy to agree with Mr. Watson's view that in the "Elegy" Gray:—

"on worn thoughts conferred  
That second youth, the perfect word,  
The elected and predestined phrase  
That had lain bound, long nights and days,  
To wear at last, when once set free,  
Immortal pellucidity."

This view seems to err as much in one direction as in the other does Wordsworth's dictum that the language of the "Elegy" is unintelligible. In fact, readers of the poem show a strong inclination to mistake the meaning of its phrases. Few, indeed, go so far astray as the correspondent of a learned periodical who wrote that "some village Hampden" was not the right description of "a Buckinghamshire squire who owned many thousand acres and sat in Parliament," or as a living scholar of some note who paraphrases the line:—

"The paths of Glory lead but to the grave"

by "For thy sake, Glory, we approach the path of death." But more pardonable errors are as plenty as blackberries. For a whole century, not only ordinary readers but such literary editors as J. W. Hales and F. T. Palgrave accepted without thought or scruple a misprint whereby was provided a sense out of harmony with the whole subject and purpose of the poem:—

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour."

The omission of the last letter in "awaits" inverts the

sense, and gives one which is impossible in the context. It makes man wait for death, whereas Gray's whole point is that death waits for man. To some mistakes Gray laid himself open by a pernicious practice of inversion:—

"For who to dumb Forgetfulness a prey  
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,  
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,  
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind?"

It does not conduce to pellucidity that in this place "prey" is in the objective case, and qualifies "being," and doubtless many readers take it as a nominative with "who," to the sad ruin of the sense; and the use of "nor cast" for the prose phrase, "without casting," has been a frequent cause of error. With all its beauty, the "Elegy" has other grave faults, and Mr. Watson would hardly deny that throughout the personification is overdone. To requite Mr. Watson for these objections, let it be said that we cannot desire better criticism than his praise of Milton's sonnets:—

"A hundred Poets bend proud necks to bear  
This yoke, this bondage. He alone could don  
His badges of subjection with the air  
Of one who puts a king's regalia on."

Mr. Watson has not many faults in technique, but his liking for open vowels would certainly have met with censure from Pope if Pope had lived to be offended by it. When we read such a line as:—

"The alpha, and omega, and whole,"

we fear that some readers will avoid the hiatus by a deplorable expedient. On the other hand, Mr. Watson gives us much poetic thought and phrase. We might wish that he had more poems that could fairly be called flawless, but, at least, we find many that are good.

Mr. Watson seems to be no good judge of a satiric epigram, at any rate, of his own, and praises good and bad indifferently. It is not enough to call a man a knave or a fool in good set terms. There must be either an implication or what used to be called a turn. Martial is fond of implications, and supplies examples which lose little in a literal translation:—

"Why don't I present you with my poems, Pontilian?  
For fear, Pontilian, you present me with yours."

Mr. Watson writes thus of a successful man:—

"Yes, titles, and emoluments, and place,  
All tell the world that you have won life's race,  
But then, 'twas your good fortune not to start  
Handicapped with a conscience or a heart."

This comes perilously near common abuse, and may well be contrasted with an epigram on a like theme by a master of letters:—

"God's laws declare thou shalt not swear  
By aught in heaven above or earth below.  
'Upon my honor!' Melville cries and lies:  
Has Melville broken God's commandment? No!"

Mr. Watson was not so fortunate as to find in his theme the double edge of another satirist:—

"They say he has no heart, but I deny it;  
He has a heart, and gets his speeches by it."

Mr. Watson satirizes a too prolific essayist, not difficult to identify:—

"The cruellest torture that a man can know,  
Passing all Torquemada's racks, is said  
To be the ceaseless, measured, leisured, slow  
Drip-drop of water on the victim's head."

"Surely it were a torment like in kind,  
If in degree less maddening, to sit still  
Under the leakage of this good man's mind,  
The eternal trickle of this blameless quill."

This has point but lacks condensation. A master of the art would have done it with half the words, nor would any desire to be just have made him write the first two lines of the second stanza. Something of the same lack of condensation seems to mark Mr. Watson's attempts to be humorous, which, to say the truth, sit less gracefully on him than his more serious ventures. His "Ballad of the Bootmaker" runs to fourteen stanzas. We cannot but think that a true satirist would have brought it within the compass of a couple, and that a true humorist, who might desire to expand, would have made it more amusing. In affectionate playfulness Mr. Watson is more successful. Cowper describes Churchill as:—

"born sole heir and single  
To dear Mat Prior's easy jingle,"

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and Mr. Watson's "Familiar Epistle" seems to have had Prior and Cowper himself in mind, if not also the use of the same metre by the fiercer spirits of Swift and Churchill. It is a form which has been little in vogue for a long time past, but, although its employment can hardly be other than imitative, and in Mr. Watson's hands is unmistakably and avowedly imitative, there is nothing to be said against its revival. It suits well for the expression of true friendship, and happily the forms and incidents of friendship are numerous enough to allow freshness even in a vehicle which at one time was overloaded with wares of no surpassing price.

#### A TWOFOLD MIND.

"The Thrush and the Jay." By SYLVIA LYND. (Constable. 5s. net.)

THE title is right, for the book is a mixture of beauty and cynicism, of sweet or rapturous notes, and the mocking or discordant cry, such as one hears in summer woods, saying, as it were, "None of your lovely sentiment, if you please! I'll suck your pretty eggs. I'll brain your tender young. Hark, how I laugh! I am the jay." Readers of "The Chorus" will remember how in that most attractive and tragic novel the two strains of passion and satire rivalled each other and clashed. They will remember the pervading beauty so sharply shattered by the cry of satire, the evident temptation to have nothing but beauty, checked by the irresistible resolve never to be soft or submerge the bitter in the sweet. Here, in this equally attractive and almost equally tragic collection of scenes and verses, the same conflicting motives will be found; the same sure insight, too, whether for beauty or derision, and the same unflinching sense for the right but unexpected word.

The scenes are made out of almost nothing—the feelings of a neglected child at a party; of a young married woman buying from a pleasing shop-assistant; of another young married woman tempted just by excitement and the longing for variety, and then discovering how cruel is the price that the world exacts; or the enmity between an exuberantly healthy wife and the valetudinarian husband; the feelings of a helpless woman when man's passion ends; the feelings of the youthful mother who remembers childhood's woes, and now upon her own children is bound to inflict just the same woes again. All common themes such as all of us have observed in life or ourselves lived through. The art lies in the delicacy of penetration, whether for sympathy or satire, or, as may well happen, for both at the same time. The art lies also in the delicacy of restraint, in the suggestion hidden in a single line, an unfrequent epigram, or just the use, as we said, of the right but unexpected word.

It is hard to illustrate this delicacy, and at the same time the clash of passion with cynicism, by extracts from scenes so delicately and closely woven. But take the case of the unhappy woman who had conceived "A Guilty Passion" for a man distinctly inferior to her husband, as she recognized, and yet one whom she loved. "Any other misfortune," we read, "could have been shared and so lightened, but this one was to be borne in solitude, in public solitude." That word, "in public solitude," is as right as unexpected, and all who have known what it is so to suffer will realize the depth of unhappiness that it covers and reveals.

"At first," the scene continues, "it had been her sin that troubled her. It was so base a treachery to the glad ordering of her life, and she had prayed to be freed from it. In the bath-room she had prayed, as that was the one place in the house secure from interruption, and her prayer had, in a sense, been answered, for after it at any rate she had found peace and joy in her heart, and an expectation of seeing the beloved at a tea party on the morrow."

That bath-room; that expectation! In them we have the jay's mocking cry, as in the distance of a forest. But often it comes much nearer than that, interrupting the thrush's rapture, but playing its natural and necessary part in nature's orchestra of life and death. On the whole, as might be expected, the thrush sings with least interruption or fear in the poems, most of which are indeed as excellent

as fresh. The two Arabian Nights poems, as we may call them, are elusive, and the second, "The Fair Persian," a little difficult. But how fine are the "Hunting Song" (of life and death), "The World is a Bridge," and "A Freed Spirit"! On the whole, we think those last two are the finest, but in all one recognizes the power of true and beautiful verse, and the phrase right but unexpected. We wish we could quote, but no lyric can ever be divided. And so we take the last poem complete—the last page of this so attractive book—an "intriguing" book, if we must reluctantly admit that un-English word. The verses which, like some of the other verses, have appeared in these columns, contain the sole reference to the war:—

"This was summer, this was peace:—  
Scarlet-laden apple trees,  
Cows that munch the dew-grey grass,  
Boys that whistle as they pass,  
Flying flowers and gulls a-flap,  
Honey fields on Golden Cap,  
Earth a blue and shining thing  
To set the angels envying.

"This was summer and this came:—  
This was a city and is flame,  
This was corn and now is mud,  
This was water and is blood;  
The beloved and the lover,  
Carriage for earth to cover,  
Youth and laughter and bright eyes  
The worm's rich prize."

#### NOVEL AND DRAMA—A TANDEM.

"A Matter of Money." By CICELY HAMILTON. (Chapman & Hall. 5s. net.)

"The Diplomat." By GUY FLEMING. (Longmans. 5s. net.)

"Moor Fires." By E. H. YOUNG. (Murray. 5s. net.)

IT is an interesting point as to how far the drama reacts on the novel, and the novel on the drama. Very little, one is inclined to think. Glance at the literary history of the novel and see how, on the whole, its English development has been on the lines of leisureliness and amplitude. English novelists like plenty of room, but the drama is more or less an attempt to pack a small space with as much relevant material as you can. But Nashe, Greene, Sidney, Lord Orrery (the author of "Parthenissa"), Aphra Behn, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, Sterne, Mrs. Radcliffe, Maturin, Lewis, Holcroft, Jane Austen, Fanny Burney, Scott, Maria Edgeworth, Meredith, Hardy, Trollope, Conrad—they all like large canvases. Modern drama could hardly influence the novel, because there is no modern drama. For all that, it is questionable whether a dramatic apprenticeship is not of practical use in the technique of constructing a novel, and whether it would not give the modern novel a sharpness of outline, a unity of treatment, and a compactness of incident, which it lacks.

Miss Hamilton pushes us off into these reflections, because "A Matter of Money" is so obviously the fruit of dramatic experience. One might almost say that its strong capability depends upon that experience. Not only is it so compressed that there are practically no frayed edges or loose ends at all; not only do characters and the episodes they naturally provoke "function" (to use an abominable modernism) smoothly and by easy interaction, but the novel itself is almost obedient to those unities of place and time about which the old classicists made such a fuss. The action consistently abides in one village, and within two houses in that village, and the narrative with its tragic climax is all over in less than a week. There is, of course, a certain amount of introductory matter, but it is strongly in hand, and the central episode, which decides and precipitates the fate of the warring personalities in the book, takes place within a couple of hours of one evening. Upon that episode, Miss Hamilton devotes more than one chapter, and with all the cumulative effect of a highly-trained stagecraft. So much so, that it is pure drama, and drama which would need but the most cursory of changes to be transplanted straight away upon the stage. The story is as familiar and unambiguous as daylight—the unhappy marriage between Lucia and Herbert Coventry, his mean tyranny over her, her surrender to the local doctor, Dr. Channing, who has a



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sober and competent wife and a child, and is hopelessly in debt; Herbert's trick to discover his wife's feelings (the episode referred to above); his determination to divorce Lucia in order to force her upon Channing's hands, and so ruin them both financially; Channing's pitiable position, and Lucia's suicide as the inevitable way out of an intolerable situation. The construction of the whole thing is a remarkable piece of work, and the force and vitality of the characters gain correspondingly with the clearness of the workmanship. It is notable, for instance, how skillfully Miss Hamilton makes us see the weak and rather futile personality of Dr. Channing, without making us despise him, and without blinding us to the cruel difficulties of his dual responsibility. Nor is Lucia's suicide a leap into melodrama. There was no alternative. "A Matter of Money," if limited in its scope, is managed, within that scope, with a solidity and adroitness wholly admirable.

To place "The Diplomat" in juxtaposition to it, is perhaps an unfair contrast. It is as different as chalk from cheese; so much so, that it would be as well to forget Miss Hamilton and remember Mr. Fleming. For it is not only that the author is as innocent as a babe of any sense of construction, but his novel in a dressing-gown does not contain so much as a plot. It concerns the family of the Wades, at the close of the eighteenth century. Now the Wades are a large family, and Mr. Fleming feels it incumbent upon him to give us a good dose of them all. As they have all quite separate interests and the most casual intercommunication; as the author is cheerfully willing to take up one and drop another where and when the fancy pleases him, we feel more like the postmaster of a largish community than the gentle reader. And yet "The Diplomat," if you give up bothering about where you are, has a sort of fragrance. Its excursive, discursive style, though rather tedious in bulk, is the style of a reflective and fastidious taste. And Mr. Fleming has a worldly-wise manner with him which is decidedly pleasant and comfortable, if you indulge in it in judicious patches—"Most of the interest in life is got from discussing affairs before you know the facts. In such a case, there is room for the wing of imagination. When the truth is known, interest dies of plethora." That kind of observation prevents one from straying too idly over Mr. Fleming's vast landscape. Like tea, whiskey, strawberry jam, and exercise, "The Diplomat" reminds you that you can have an agreeable modicum and at the same time too much of a good thing.

"Moor Fires" gives one the impression of a good book gone wrong. Realizing the force, seriousness, and originality of the author behind it, one is the more bewildered at the terrible tangle he has made of it. The Canipers are a step-mother, two daughters, and two sons, who live on a lonely moor. And Helen is the heroine—a heroine of truth, honesty, and unselfishness. Her sister, Miriam, a mere grasshopper, has a flirtation with the coarse, stolid, but quite human farmer, George Halkett. George gets exasperated with her, and one night carries her off to his bedroom. Helen arrives at the proper nick, and actually promises to marry George, on condition that he will let Miriam go. Helen, we may add, is already deeply in love with and betrothed to Zebedee Mackenzie, the local doctor. And so we are confronted with yet another of those childish, artificial, immoral, and impossible situations of self-immolation, which are a godsend to the bad novelist, but should have been diabolical to Mr. Young. After that, a narrative which set out with excellent promise of firm and delicate characterization, falls utterly to pieces. We are landed in one absurdity after another. Helen, the apostle of truth and honesty, who so nobly (and unnecessarily) creates a martyrdom for herself, at least owes it to George and her character to tell him about Zebedee. Even granted the false situation, she owes him that. But not a word does she tell him, and we cannot but sympathize with his resentment when he discovers her rather furtive love-passages with Zebedee. Finally, she sets fire to her house, and George is killed in a delusion that he is rescuing her (she being safely on the lawn all the time). It says a good deal for the futility of Helen's bargain with George that we accept such a farcical culmination with hardly a murmur. The tragedy indeed lies not in the book, but in so gifted a novelist as Mr. Young writing it.

## The Week in the City.

The principal features of the Stock Exchange during the last few days have been the firmness of gilt-edged securities owing to a growing belief that the closing chapters of the war have at last opened, and the depression in shipping shares as a result, partly of uncertainty as to what the new Shipping Controller may do, partly from a fear that the outbreak of peace may speedily cause a return to unprofitable freights. On the afternoon of Mr. Lloyd George's statement I went into the City and had a number of conversations. I found that Indian merchants were suffering a good deal from the India Council's Limitation on the sale of Bills. One City man described the situation as the Indian crisis. He said that this action, following on the monetary and exchange difficulties in New York, had greatly sobered opinion; and Mr. Bonar Law's speech last week, together with the new daily rate of war expenditure, had contributed in the same direction. The extraordinary rise in the price of silver seems to point to a possibility that Austria and Russia may, after the war, find it necessary to revert from a gold to a silver standard.

### THE HOME RAILWAY MARKET.

With the approach of the dividend season investors have been turning their attention to Home Rails, and as the market was rather short of stock, a little brisk buying sufficed to send prices rapidly upwards. The first signs of activity appeared in the latter part of last week, and the extent of the recovery from the low level to which prices had fallen can be seen from the following table:—

	Highest 1916.	Price Dec. 12.	Price Dec. 19.	Rise.
Great Eastern	41½	34½	36½	+ 2½
Great Northern Prefd.	77	61½	64½	+ 2½
Great Northern Defd.	41½	36	38	+ 2
Great Western	103	87½	90½	+ 3½
Lancs and Yorks	77½	65½	68	+ 2½
Midland Defd.	65½	55½	59	+ 3½
North Eastern	108½	99½	102½	+ 3
North Western	110½	93½	98	+ 4½
South Western Defd.	28½	22½	27½	+ 5½
Brighton Defd.	68½	61	65½	+ 4½
South Eastern Defd.	30½	25	27½	+ 2½

Mr. Bonar Law's admission that the arrangement with the Government had proved a good bargain for the State also attracted attention, and although no figures can be given, it is not improbable that there will be some profit shown, which will considerably help the companies when the final terms of settlement come to be negotiated.

### KAFFIR DIVIDENDS.

Several of the South African mining companies have declared their final dividends, which compare those for the corresponding period of 1915 as follows:—

	1915. Per cent.	1916. Per cent.
Consolidated Main Reef	6½*	5*
City Deep	20	22½
Crown Mines	30	25
Goldenhuis Deep	10	12½
Modderfontein (New)	16½*	16½*
Modder B	35	40
Nourse Mines	5*	6½*
Rand Mines	80	75
Robinson	6	4
Rose Deep	15	11½
Village Deep	11½	10
Village Main Reef	Nil.	15
Witwatersrand Deep	13½	10

\* Interim dividends.

The operations of the Bantjes Consolidated for the current year will show a loss, and no dividend can, therefore, be declared, while owing to the heavy expenditure which will have to be met in 1917, the directors of the Durban Roodeport Deep are making no final distribution for 1916. Heavy capital expenditure for which provision is being made out of current profits is responsible for the reduction in the Consolidated Main Reef Dividend. No final distribution is made by the East Rand Proprietary, but this decision was not unexpected. The Christmas dividend announcements so far have had practically no effect upon prices.

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